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IVANHOE

CHAPTER I

In that pleasant district of merry England which is watered by the river Don, there extended in ancient times a large forest, covering the greater part of the beautiful hills and valleys which lie between Sheffield and the pleasant town of Doncaster. Here were fought many of the most desperate battles during the Civil Wars of the Roses ; and here also flourished in ancient times those bands of gallant outlaws whose deeds have been rendered so popular in English song.

The sun was setting upon one of the rich grassy glades of the forest mentioned above. Hundreds of broad-headed, short-stemmed, wide-branched oaks flung their gnarled arms over a thick carpet of the most delicious greensward ; in some places they were intermingled with beeches, hollies, and copsewood of various descriptions, so closely as totally to intercept the level beams of the sinking

sun ; in others they receded from each other, forming those long sweeping vistas in the intricacy of which the eye delights to lose itself, while imagination considers them as the paths to yet wilder scenes of silvan solitude. Here the red rays of the sun shot a broken and discoloured light, that partially hung upon the shattered boughs and mossy trunks of the trees, and there they illuminated in brilliant patches the portions of turf to which they made their way.

The human figures which completed this landscape were in number two. The older of these men had a stern, savage, and wild aspect. His garment was of the simplest form imaginable, being a close jacket with sleeves, composed of the tanned skin of some animal. This vestment reached from the throat to the knees, and served at once all the usual purposes of body-clothing ; there was no wider opening at the collar than was necessary to admit the passage of the head, from which it may be inferred that it was put on by slipping it over the head and shoulders. Sandals bound with thongs made of boar's hide, protected the feet, and a roll of thin leather was twined around the legs, and, ascending above the calf, left the knees bare, like those of a Scottish Highlander. To make the jacket sit yet more close to the body, it was

gathered at the middle by a broad leathern belt, secured by a brass buckle; to one side of which was attached a sort of scrip, and to the other a horn. In the same belt was stuck one of those long, broad, sharp-pointed and two-edged knives, with a buck's-horn handle, which were fabricated in the neighbourhood, and bore even at this early period the name of a Sheffield whittle. The man had no covering upon his head, which was only defended by his own thick hair, matted and twisted together, and scorched by the influence of the sun into a rusty dark-red colour, forming a contrast with the overgrown beard upon his cheeks, which was rather of a yellow or amber hue. One part of his dress, too remarkable to be suppressed, was a brass ring, resembling a dog's collar, but without any opening, and soldered fast round his neck, so loose as to form no impediment to his breathing, yet so tight as to be incapable of being removed, except by the use of the file. On this singular gorget was engraved in Saxon characters an inscription of the following purport:—"Gurth, the son of Beowulph, is the born thrall of Cedric of Rotherwood."

Beside the swineherd, for such was Gurth's occupation, was seated a person about ten years younger in appearance, whose dress, though

resembling his companion's in form, was of better materials, and of a more fantastic appearance. His jacket had been stained a bright purple hue, upon which there had been some attempt to paint grotesque ornaments in different colours. To the jacket he added a short cloak, which scarcely reached halfway down his thigh ; it was of crimson cloth, though a good deal soiled, lined with bright yellow. He had thin silver bracelets upon his arms, and on his neck a collar of the same metal, bearing the inscription, "Wamba, the son of Witless, is the thrall of Cedric of Rotherwood." This personage had the same sort of sandals with his companion, but instead of the roll of leather thong, his legs were cased in a sort of gaiters, of which one was red and the other yellow. He was provided also with a cap, having around it more than one bell, about the size of those attached to hawks, which jingled as he turned his head to one side or other; and as he seldom remained a minute in the same posture, the sound might be considered as incessant. Around the edge of this cap was a stiff bandeau of leather, cut at the top into open work, resembling a coronet, while a prolonged bag arose from within it, and fell down on one shoulder like an old-fashioned nightcap.

It was to this part of the cap that the bells were attached ; which circumstance, as well as the shape of his head-dress, and his own half-crazed, half-cunning expression of countenance, sufficiently pointed him out as belonging to the race of domestic clowns or jesters, maintained in the houses of the wealthy, to help away the tedium of those lingering hours which they were obliged to spend within doors. He bore, like his companion, a scrip attached to his belt, but had neither horn nor knife, being probably considered as belonging to a class whom it is esteemed dangerous to entrust with edge-tools. In place of these, he was equipped with a sword of lath.

The outward appearance of these two men formed scarce a stronger contrast than their look and demeanour. That of the serf or bondsman was sad and sullen; his aspect was bent on the ground with an air of deep dejection, which might be almost construed into apathy, had not the fire which occasionally sparkled in his red eye manifested that there slumbered, under the appearance of sullen despondency, a sense of oppression, and a disposition to resistance. The looks of Wamba, on the other hand, indicated, as usual with his class, a sort of vacant curiosity, and fidgety impatience of any

posture of repose, together with the utmost self-satisfaction respecting his own situation and the appearance which he made.

"The curse of St. Withold upon these infernal porkers!" said the swineherd, after blowing his horn obstreperously, to collect together the scattered herd of swine, which, answering his call with notes equally melodious, made, however, no haste to remove themselves from the luxurious banquet of beech-mast and acorns on which they had fattened, or to forsake the marshy banks of the rivulet, where several of them, half-plunged in mud, lay stretched at their ease, altogether regardless of the voice of their keeper. "The curse of St. Withold upon them and me!" said Gurth; "if the two-legged wolf snap not up some of them ere nightfall, I am no true man. Here, Fangs! Fangs!" he ejaculated at the top of his voice to a ragged, wolfish-looking dog, which ran limping about as if with the purpose of seconding his master in collecting the refractory grunters; but which in fact from the misapprehension of the swineherd's signals, ignorance of his own duty, or malice prepense, only drove them hither and thither, and increased the evil which he seemed to design to remedy.

"Gurth," said Wamba, "I advise thee to call off Fangs, and leave the herd to their destiny, which, whether they meet with bands of travelling soldiers or of outlaws, or of wandering pilgrims, can be little else than to be converted into Normans before morning, to thy no small ease and comfort."

"The swine turned Normans to my comfort!" quoth Gurth; "expound that to me, Wamba, for my brain is too dull, and my mind too vexed, to read riddles."

"Why, how call you those grunting brutes running about on their four legs?" demanded Wamba.

"Swine, fool, swine," said the herd; "every fool knows that."

"And swine is good Saxon," said the Jester; "but how call you the sow when she is flayed, and drawn, and quartered, and hung up by the heels, like a traitor?"

"Pork," answered the swineherd.

"I am very glad every fool knows that too," said Wamba, "and pork, I think, is good Norman-French; and so when the brute lives, and is in the charge of a Saxon slave, she goes by her Saxon name; but becomes a Norman, and is called pork, when she is carried to the Castle-hall to feast among the nobles. What dost thou think of this, friend Gurth, ha?"

"By St. Dunstan," answered Gurth, "thou speakest but sad truth; little is left to us but the air we breathe, and that appears to have been reserved with much hesitation, solely for the purpose of enabling us to endure the tasks they lay upon our shoulders. The finest and the fattest is for their board; the best and bravest supply their foreign masters with soldiers, and whiten distant lands with their bones, leaving few here who have either will or the power to protect the unfortunate Saxon. God's blessing on our Master Cedric, he hath done the work of a man in standing in the gap; but Reginald Front-de-Bœuf is coming down to this country in person, and we shall soon see how little Cedric's trouble will avail him."

"Gurth," said the Jester, "I know thou thinkest me a fool, or thou wouldst not be so rash in putting thy head into my mouth. One word to Reginald Front-de-Bœuf or Philip de Malvoisin, that thou hast spoken treason against the Norman —and thou art but a castaway swineherd; thou wouldst waver on one of these trees as a terror to all evil speakers against dignities."

"Dog, thou wouldst not betray me," said Gurth, "after having led me on to speak so much at disadvantage?"

"Betray thee!" answered the Jester; "no, that were the trick of a wise man; a fool cannot half so well help himself. But soft, whom have we here?" he said, listening to the trampling of several horses which became then audible.

"Never mind whom," answered Gurth, who had now got his herd before him, and, with the aid of Fangs, was driving them down one of the long dim vistas in the forest.

"Nay, but I must see the riders," answered Wamba; "perhaps they are come from Fairyland with a message from King Oberon."

"A murrain take thee!" rejoined the swineherd; "wilt thou talk of such things, while a terrible storm of thunder and lightning is raging within a few miles of us? Hark, how the thunder rumbles! Let us home ere the storm begins to rage, for the night will be fearful."

Wamba seemed to feel the force of this appeal, and accompanied his companion, who began his journey after catching up a long quarter-staff which lay upon the grass beside him.

CHAPTER II

Notwithstanding the occasional exhortation and chiding of his companion, the noise of the horsemen's feet continuing to approach, Wamba could not be prevented from lingering occasionally on the road, upon every pretence which occurred.

The horsemen, who soon overtook them, were ten in number. The two who rode foremost seemed to be persons of considerable importance, and the others were their attendants. One of these personages was obviously an ecclesiastic of high rank; his dress was that of a Cistercian Monk, but composed of materials much finer than those which the rule of that order admitted. His mantle and hood were of the best Flanders cloth, and fell in ample, and not ungraceful, folds around a handsome though somewhat corpulent person. His countenance bore as little the marks of self-denial as his habit indicated contempt of worldly splendour. His profession and situation had taught him a ready command over his countenance, which he could contract at pleasure into solemnity, although its natural expression was that of good-humoured social indulgence. In defiance of conventual rules and the edicts of popes and councils, the sleeves of this dignitary were lined

and turned up with rich furs, his mantle was secured at the throat with a golden clasp, and the whole dress proper to his order much refined upon and ornamented. He rode upon a well-fed, ambling mule, whose furniture was highly decorated, and whose bridle, according to the fashion of the day, was ornamented with silver bells.

The companion of the church dignitary was a man past forty, thin, strong, tall, and muscular; an athletic figure, on which long fatigue and constant exercise seemed to have left none of the softer part of the human form, having reduced the whole to brawn, bones, and sinews, which had sustained a thousand toils, and were ready to dare a thousand more. His head was covered with a scarlet cap, faced with fur. His countenance was fully displayed, and its expression was calculated to impress a degree of awe, if not of fear, upon strangers. High features, naturally strong and powerfully expressive, had been burnt almost into Negro blackness by constant exposure to the tropical sun. His keen, piercing, dark eyes told in every glance a history of difficulties subdued and dangers dared, and seemed to challenge opposition to his wishes, for the pleasure of sweeping it from his road by a determined exertion of courage and of will; a deep scar on his brow

gave additional sternness to his countenance and a sinister expression to one of his eyes, which had been slightly injured on the same occasion, and of which the vision, though perfect, was in a slight and partial degree distorted.

The upper dress of this personage resembled that of his companion in shape, being a long monastic mantle; but the colour, being scarlet, showed that he did not belong to any of the regular orders of monks. On the right shoulder of the mantle there was cut, in white cloth, a cross of a peculiar form. This upper robe concealed a shirt of linked mail, with sleeves and gloves of the same, curiously plaited and interwoven. The forepart of his thighs, where the folds of the mantle permitted them to be seen, were also covered with linked mail; the knees and feet were defended by splints, or thin plates of steel, ingeniously jointed upon each other ; and mail hose, reaching from the ankle to the knee, effectually protected the legs. In his girdle he wore a long and double-edged dagger.

He rode, not a mule, like his companion, but a strong hackney for the road, to save his gallant war-horse, which a squire led behind. On one side of the saddle hung a short battle-axe, richly inlaid with Damascene carving ; on the other the

rider's plumed headpiece and hood of mail, with a long two-handed sword. A second squire held aloft his master's lance, from the extremity of which fluttered a small banderole or streamer, bearing a cross of the same form with that embroidered upon his cloak. He also carried his small triangular shield, broad enough at the top to protect the breast, and from thence diminishing to a point. It was covered with a scarlet cloth, which prevented the device from being seen.

These two squires were followed by two attendants, whose dark visages, white turbans, and the Oriental form of their garments, showed them to be natives of some distant Eastern country. The whole appearance of this warrior and his retinue was wild and outlandish.

The monk Wamba instantly knew to be the Prior of Jorvaulx Abbey, well known for many miles around as a lover of the chase, of the banquet, and, if fame did him not wrong, of other worldly pleasures still more inconsistent with his monastic vows.

But the singular appearance of his companion and his attendants arrested the attention of the Saxon serfs and excited their wonder, and they could scarcely attend to the Prior of Jorvaulx's question, when he demanded if they knew of any

place of harbourage in the vicinity; so much were they surprised at the half-monastic, half-military appearance of the swarthy stranger, and at the uncouth dress and arms of his Eastern attendants.

"Tell me, good fellow," said the Prior to Wamba, and seconded his speech by a small piece of silver coin, "the way to Cedric the Saxon's; you cannot be ignorant of it, and it is your duty to direct the wanderer even when his character is less sanctified than ours. This reverend brother has been all his life engaged in fighting among the Saracens for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre; he is of the order of Knights Templars whom you may have heard of."

"Your reverences," answered Wamba, "must hold on this path till you come to a sunken cross, of which scarce a cubit's length remains above ground; then take the path to the left, for there are four which meet at Sunken Cross, and I trust your reverences will obtain shelter before the storm comes on."

The Abbot thanked his sage adviser; and the cavalcade, setting spurs to their horses, rode on as men do who wish to reach their inn before the bursting of a night-storm.

As their horses' hoofs died away, Gurth said to his companion, "If they follow thy wise direc-

tion, the reverend fathers will hardly reach Rotherwood this night."

"No," said the Jester, grinning, "but they may reach Sheffield if they have good luck, and that is as fit a place for them. I am not so bad a woodsman as to show the dog where the deer lies, if I have no mind he should chase him."

"Thou art right," said Gurth.

We return to the riders, who had soon left the bondsmen far behind them, and who maintained the following conversation in the Norman-French language, usually employed by the superior classes.

"Brother Brian," said the Prior, "remember what I told you : this wealthy franklin, Cedric, is proud, fierce, jealous, and irritable. He stands up so sternly for the privileges of his race, and is so proud for his uninterrupted descent from Hereward, a renowned champion of the Heptarchy, that he is universally called Cedric the Saxon."

"Prior Aymer," said the Templar, "I shall expect much beauty in this celebrated Rowena, to counterbalance the self-denial and forbearance which I must exert if I am to court the favour of such a seditious churl as you have described her father Cedric."

"Cedric is not her father," replied the Prior, "and is but of remote relation. She is descended

from higher blood than even he pretends to, and is but distantly connected with him by birth. Her guardian, however, he is, self-constituted as I believe; but his ward is as dear to him as if she were his own child. Of her beauty you shall soon be judge! But be careful how you look on Rowena, whom Cedric cherishes with the most jealous care; if he take the least alarm in that quarter we are but lost men. It is said he banished his only son from family for lifting his eyes in the way of affection towards this beauty, who may be worshipped, it seems, at a distance, but is not to be approached with other thoughts than such as we bring to the shrine of the Blessed Virgin."

"Well, you have said enough," answered the Templar. "I will for a night put on the needful restraint, and deport me as meekly as a maiden; but as for the fear of his expelling us by violence, myself and squires, with Hamet and Abdulla, will warrant you against that disgrace. Doubt not that we shall be strong enough to make good our quarters."

"We must not let it come so far," answered the Prior. "But here is the clown's sunken cross, and the night is so dark that we can hardly see which of the roads we are to follow. He bid us turn, I think, to the left."

"To the right," said Brian, "to the best of my remembrance."

"To the left—certainly the left; I remember his pointing with his wooden sword."

"Ay, but he held his sword in his left hand, and so pointed across his body with it," said the Templar.

Each maintained his opinion with sufficient obstinacy, as is usual in all such cases; the attendants were appealed to, but they had not been near enough to hear Wamba's directions. At length Brian remarked, what had at first escaped him in the twilight, —"Here is some one either asleep or lying dead at the foot of this cross. Hugo, stir him with the butt-end of thy lance."

This was no sooner done than the figure arose, exclaiming in good French, "Whosoever thou art, it is discourteous in thee to disturb my thoughts."

"We did but wish to ask thee," said the Prior, "the road to Rotherwood, the abode of Cedric the Saxon."

"I myself am bound thither," replied the stranger, "and if I had a horse, I would be your guide, for the way is somewhat intricate, though perfectly well known to me."

"Thou shalt have both thanks and reward, my friend," said the Prior, "if thou wilt bring us to Cedric's in safety."

And he caused one of his attendants to mount his own led horse, and give that upon which he had hitherto ridden to the stranger who was to serve for a guide.

Their conductor pursued an opposite road from that which Wamba had recommended for the purpose of misleading them. The path soon led deeper into the woodland, and crossed more than one brook, the appoach to which was rendered perilous by the marshes through which it flowed; but the stranger seemed to know, as if by instinct, the soundest ground and the safest points of passage; and, by dint of caution and attention, brought the party safely into a wider avenue than any they had yet seen; and, pointing to a large, low, irregular building at the upper extremity, he said to the Prior, "Yonder is Rotherwood, the dwelling of Cedric the Saxon."

This was a joyful intimation to Aymer, whose nerves were none of the strongest, and who had suffered such agitation and alarm in the course of passing through the dangerous bogs, that he had not yet had the curiosity to ask his guide a single question. Finding himself now at his ease and near shelter, his curiosity began to awake, and he demanded of the guide who and what he was.

"A palmer, just returned from the Holy Land," was the answer. "I was born a native of these parts," and as he made the reply they stood before the mansion of Cedric—a low, irregular building, containing several courtyards or enclosures, extending over a considerable space of ground, and which, though its size argued the inhabitant to be a person of wealth, differed entirely from the tall, turreted, and castellated buildings in which the Norman nobility resided.

Before the entrance to this dwelling the Templar wound his horn loudly ; for the rain, which had long threatened, began now to descend with great violence.

CHAPTER III

In a hall, the height of which was greatly disproportioned to its extreme length and width, a long oaken table formed of planks rough-hewn from the forest stood ready prepared for the evening meal of Cedric the Saxon.

The other appointments of the chamber partook of the rude simplicity of the Saxon period, which Cedric piqued himself upon maintaining. The floor was composed of earth mixed with lime, trodden into a hard substance, such as is often employed in flooring our modern barns. For about one quarter of the length of the apartment the floor was raised by a step, and this space, which was called the dais, was occupied only by the principal members of the family and visitors of distinction. For this purpose, a table richly covered with scarlet cloth was placed transversely across the platform, from the middle of which ran the longer and lower board, at which the domestics and inferior persons fed, down towards the bottom of the hall. The whole resembled the form of the letter T.

In the centre of the upper table were placed two chairs more elevated than the rest, for the master and the mistress of the family, who presided over the scene of hospitality, and from doing so derived their Saxon title of honour, which signifies "the Dividers of Bread."

One of these seats was at present occupied by Cedric the Saxon, who, though but in rank a thane, or, as the Normans called him, a franklin, felt at the delay of his evening meal an irritable impatience.

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It appeared, indeed, from the countenance of this proprietor, that he was of a frank, but hasty and choleric temper. He was not above the middle stature, but broad-shouldered, long-armed, and powerfully made, like one accustomed to endure the fatigue of war or of the chase; his face was broad, with large blue eyes, open and frank features, fine teeth, and a well-formed head, altogether expressive of that sort of good humour which often lodges with a sudden and hasty temper.

His dress was a tunic of forest green, furred at the throat and cuffs with what was called minever. This doublet hung unbuttoned over a close dress of scarlet which sate tight to his body; he had breeches of the same, but they did not reach below the lower part of the thigh, leaving the knee exposed. His feet had sandals of the same fashion with the peasants, but of finer materials, and secured in the front with golden clasps. He had bracelets of gold upon his arms, and a broad collar of the same precious metal around his neck. About his waist he wore a richly studded belt, in which was stuck a short, straight, two-edged sword, with a sharp point, so disposed as to hang almost perpendicularly by his side.

Several domestics watched the looks and waited the commands of the Saxon dignitary. Two

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or three servants of a superior order stood behind their master upon the dais ; the rest occupied the lower part of the hall.

Cedric was in no very placid state of mind. The Lady Rowena, who had been absent to attend an evening mass at a distant church, had but just returned, and was changing her garments, which had been wetted by the storm. There was as yet no tidings of Gurth and his charge, which should long since have been driven home from the forest ; and such was the insecurity of the period as to render it probable that the delay might be explained by some depredation of the outlaws, with whom the adjacent forest abounded.

Besides these subjects of anxiety, the Saxon thane was impatient for the presence of his favourite clown, Wamba, whose jests, such as they were, served for a sort of seasoning to his evening meal. Add to all this, Cedric had fasted since noon, and his usual supper hour was long past. His displeasure was expressed in broken sentences, partly muttered to himself partly addressed to the domestics who stood around ; and particularly to his cupbearer, who offered him from time to time, as a sedative, a silver goblet filled with wine—" Why tarries the Lady Rowena ? "

"She is but changing her head-gear," replied a female attendant, with as much confidence as the favourite lady's maid usually answers the master of a modern family; "you would not wish her to sit down to the banquet in her hood and kirtle?"

This undeniable argument produced a sort of acquiescent "Umph!" on the part of the Saxon, with the addition, "I wish her devotion may choose fair weather for the next visit to St. John's Kirk. But what, in the name of ten devils," continued he, turning to the cupbearer, and raising his voice, as if happy to have found a channel into which he might divert his indignation without fear or control—"what in the name of ten devils, keeps Gurth so long a-field? I suppose we shall have an evil account of the herd; he was wont to be a faithful and cautious drudge, and I had destined him for something better."

Oswald, the cupbearer, modestly suggested, "that it was scarce an hour since the tolling of the curfew"—an ill-chosen apology, since it turned upon a topic so harsh to Saxon ears.

"The foul fiend," exclaimed Cedric, "take the curfew bell, and the tyrant by whom it was devised, and the heartless slave who names it with a Saxon tongue to a Saxon ear! The

curfew ! " he added, pausing—"ay, the curfew which compels true men to extinguish their lights, that thieves and robbers may work their deeds in darkness ! I shall hear, I guess, that my faithful slave is murdered, and my goods are taken for a prey—and Wamba—Where is Wamba? Said not some one he had gone forth with Gurth ? "

Oswald replied in the affirmative.

" Why, this is better and better ! He is carried off too, the Saxon fool, to serve the Norman lord. Fools are we all indeed that serve them, and fitter subjects for their scorn and laughter than if we were born with but half our wits. But I will be avenged," he added, starting from his chair in impatience at the supposed injury, and catching hold of his boar spear ; " I will go with my complaint to the great council. Ah, Wilfred, Wilfred ! " he exclaimed in a lower tone, " couldst thou have ruled thine unreasonable passion, thy father had not been left in his age like the solitary oak that throws out its shattered and unprotected branches against the full sweep of the tempest ! " The reflection seemed to conjure into sadness his irritated feelings. Replacing his javelin, he resumed his seat, bent his looks downward, and appeared to be absorbed in melancholy reflection.

From his musing, Cedric was suddenly awakened by the blast of a horn.

"To the gate, knaves!" said the Saxon hastily. "See what tidings that horn tells us of."

Returning in less than three minutes, a warder announced, "that the Prior Aymer of Jorvaulx, and the good knight Brian de Bois-Guilbert, commander of the valiant and venerable order of Knights Templars, with a small retinue, requested hospitality and lodging for the night, being on their way to a tournament which was to be held not far from Ashby-de-la-Zouche on the second day from the present."

"Aymer—the Prior Aymer! Brian de Bois-Guilbert!" muttered Cedric, "Normans both; but Norman or Saxon, the hospitality of Rotherwood must not be impeached; they are welcome, since they have chosen to halt. Go, Hundebert," he added, to a sort of major-domo who stood behind him with a white wand, "take six of the attendants and introduce the strangers to the guests' lodging. Look after their horses and mules, and see their train lack nothing. Say to them, Hundebert, that Cedric would himself bid them welcome, but he is under a vow never to step more than three steps from the dais of his own hall to meet any who shares not

the blood of Saxon royalty. Begone ! see them carefully tended.''

The major-domo departed with several attendants to execute his master's commands. "The Prior Aymer !" repeated Cedric. "This Prior is, they say, a free and jovial priest, who loves the wine-cup and the bugle-horn better than bell and book. Good ; let him come, he shall be welcome. How named ye the Templar ?"

"Brian de Bois-Guilbert."

"Bois-Guilbert," said Cedric, "Bois-Guilbert ! That name has been spread wide both for good and evil. They say he is valiant as the bravest of his order; but stained with their usual vices—pride, arrogance, cruelty, and voluptuousness—a hard-hearted man, who knows neither fear of earth nor awe of heaven. So say the few warriors who have returned from Palestine. Well, it is but for one night; he shall be welcome too. Elgitha, let thy Lady Rowena know we shall not this night expect her in the hall, unless such be her especial pleasure."

"But it will be her especial pleasure," answered Elgitha, with great readiness, "for she is ever desirous to hear the latest news from Palestine."

Cedric darted at the forward damsel a glance of hasty resentment; but Rowena and whatever

belonged to her were privileged, and secure from his anger. He only replied, "Silence, maiden; thy tongue outruns thy discretion. Say my message to thy mistress, and let her do her pleasure. Here, at least, the descendant of Alfred still reigns a princess." Elgitha left the apartment.

"Palestine!" repeated the Saxon, "Palestine! how many ears are turned to the tales which dissolute crusaders or hypocritical pilgrims bring from that fatal land! I too might ask—I too might inquire—I too might listen with a beating heart to fables which the wily strollers devise to cheat us into hospitality; but no—the son who has disobeyed me is no longer mine; nor will I concern myself more for his fate than for that of the most worthless among the millions that ever shaped the cross on their shoulder, rushed into excess and blood-guiltiness, and called it an accomplishment of the will of God."

He knit his brows, and fixed his eyes for an instant on the ground; as he raised them, the folding doors at the bottom of the hall were cast wide, and preceded by the major-domo with his wand, and four domestics bearing blazing torches, the guests of the evening entered the apartment.

CHAPTER IV

The Prior Aymer had taken the opportunity afforded him of changing his riding robe for one of yet more costly materials, over which he wore a cope curiously embroidered.

The appearance of the Knight Templar was also changed; and, though less studiously bedecked with ornament, his dress was as rich, and his appearance far more commanding, than that of his companion.

These two dignified persons were followed by their respective attendants, and at a more humble distance by their guide, whose figure had nothing more remarkable than it derived from the usual weeds of a pilgrim. A cloak, or mantle of coarse black serge enveloped his whole body. Coarse sandals, bound with thongs, on his bare feet; a broad and shadowy hat, with cockle-shells stitched on its brim, and a long staff shod with iron, to the upper end of which was attached a branch of palm, completed the Palmer's attire. He followed modestly the last of the train which entered the hall, and, observing that the lower table scarce afforded room sufficient for the domestics of Cedric and the retinue of his guests, he withdrew to a settle placed beside, and almost

under, one of the large chimneys, and seemed to employ himself in drying his garments, until the retreat of some one should make room at the board, or the hospitality of the steward should supply him with refreshments in the place he had chosen apart.

Cedric rose to receive his guests with an air of dignified hospitality, and, descending from the dais, or elevated part of his hall, made three steps towards them, and then awaited their approach.

"I grieve," he said, "reverend Prior, that my vow binds me to advance no farther upon this floor of my fathers, even to receive such guests as you and this valiant Knight of the Holy Temple. But my steward has expounded to you the cause of my seeming discourtesy. Let me also pray that you will excuse my speaking to you in my native language, and that you will reply in the same if your knowledge of it permits; if not, I sufficiently understand Norman to follow your meaning."

"Vows," said the Abbot, "are the knots which tie us to heaven, and must be unloosened, and discharged, worthy franklin, unless our Holy Mother Church shall pronounce the contrary. And respecting language, I willingly hold communication in that spoken by my respected grandmother, Hilda of Middleham, who died in odour of sanctity—God be gracious to her soul."

When the Prior had ceased what he meant as a conciliatory harrangue, his companion said briefly and emphatically, "I speak ever French, the language of King Richard and his nobles; but I understand English sufficiently to communicate with the natives of the country."

Cedric darted at the speaker one of those hasty and impatient glances which comparisons between the two rival nations seldom failed to call forth; but, recollecting the duties of hospitality he suppressed further show of resentment, and motioning with his hand, caused his guests to assume two seats a little lower than his own, but placed close beside him, and gave a signal that the evening meal should be placed upon the board.

While the attendants hastened to obey Cedric's commands, his eye distinguished Gurth, the swineherd, who, with his companion Wamba, had just entered the hall. "Send these loitering knaves up hither," said the Saxon, impatiently. And when the culprits came before the dais, "How comes it, villains, that ye have loitered abroad so late as this? Hast thou brought home thy charge, sirrah Gurth, or hast thou left them to robbers and marauders?"

"The herd is safe, so please ye," said Gurth.

"But it does not please me, thou knave," said Cedric, "that I should be made to suppose

otherwise for two hours, and sit here devising vengeance against my neighbours for wrongs they have not done me. I crave your pardon, my worthy guests, I am beset here with neighbours that match your infidels, Sir Knight, in Holy Land. But your homely fare is before you; feed, and let welcome make amends for hard fare."

The feast, however, which was spread upon the board needed no apologies from the lord of the mansion. Swine's flesh, dressed in several modes, appeared on the lower part of the board, as also that of fowls, deer, goats, and hares, and various kinds of fish, together with huge loaves and cakes of bread, and sundry confections made of fruits and honey. Beside each person of rank was placed a goblet of silver ; the lower board was accommodated with large drinking-horns.

When the repast was about to commence, the major-domo, or steward, suddenly raising his wand, said aloud—" Forbear! Place for the Lady Rowena." A side-door at the upper end of the hall now opened behind the banquet table, and Rowena, followed by four female attendants, entered the apartment. Cedric, though surprised, and perhaps not altogether agreeably so, at his ward appearing in public on this occasion, hastened to meet her, and to conduct her, with

respectful ceremony, to the elevated seat at his own right hand appropriated to the lady of the mansion. All stood up to receive her; and, replying to their courtesy by a mute gesture of salutation, she moved gracefully forward to assume her place at the board.

Accustomed only to act upon the immediate impulse of his own wishes, Brian de Bois-Guilbert kept his eyes riveted on the Saxon beauty.

Formed in the best proportions of her sex, Rowena was tall in stature. Her complexion was exquisitely fair. Her clear blue eye seemed capable to kindle as well as melt, to command as well as to beseech. Her profuse hair, of a colour betwixt brown and flaxen, was arranged in a fanciful and graceful manner in numerous ringlets, to form which art had probably aided nature. A golden chain, to which was attached a small reliquary of the same metal, hung round her neck. She wore bracelets on her arms, which were bare. Her dress was an undergown and kirtle of pale sea-green silk, over which hung a long crimson robe. A veil of silk, interwoven with gold, was attached to the upper part of it, which could be, at the wearer's pleasure, either drawn over the face and bosom after the Spanish

fashion, or disposed as a sort of drapery round the shoulders.

When Rowena perceived the Knight Templar's eyes bent on her, she drew with dignity the veil around her face.

Cedric saw the motion and its cause. "Sir Templar," said he, "the cheeks of our Saxon maidens have seen too little of the sun to enable them to bear the fixed glance of a crusader."

"If I have offended," replied Sir Brian, "I crave your pardon—that is, I crave the Lady Rowena's pardon,—for my humility will carry me no lower."

"The Lady Rowena," said the Prior, "has punished us all, in chastising the boldness of my friend. Let me hope she will be less cruel to the splendid train which are to meet at the tournament."

"Our going thither," said Cedric, "is uncertain. I love not these vanities, which were unknown to my fathers when England was free."

"Let us hope, nevertheless," said the Prior, "our company may determine you to travel thitherward; when the roads are so unsafe, the escort of Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert is not to be despised."

"Sir Prior," answered the Saxon, "wheresoever I have travelled in this land, I have

hitherto found myself, with the assistance of my good sword and faithful followers, in no respect needful of other aid.—I drink to you, Sir Prior, in this cup of wine, which I trust your taste will approve."

"And I," said the Templar, filling his goblet, "drink wassail to the fair Rowena; for since her namesake introduced the word into England, has never been one more worthy of such a tribute."

"I will spare your courtesy, Sir Knight," said Rowena with dignity, and without unveiling herself; "or rather I will tax it so far as to require of you the latest news from Palestine, a theme more agreeable to our English ears than the compliments which your French breeding teaches."

"I have little of importance to say, lady," answered Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, "excepting the confirmed tidings of a truce with Saladin."

Conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of the porter's page, who announced that there was a stranger at the gate, imploring admittance and hospitality.

"Admit him," said Cedric, "be he who or what he may; a night like that which roars without compels even wild animals to herd with tame, and to seek the protection of man. Let

his wants be ministered to with all care. Look to it, Oswald."

And the steward left the banqueting hall to see the commands of his patron obeyed.

CHAPTER V

Oswald returning, whispered into the ear of his master, "It is a Jew, who calls himself Isaac of York ; is it fit I should marshal him into the hall ?"

"Let Gurth do thine office, Oswald," said Wamba, with his usual effrontery ; "the swine-herd will be a fit usher to the Jew."

"Saint Mary," said the Abbot, crossing himself, "an unbelieving Jew and admitted into this presence !"

"A dog Jew," echoed the Templar, "to approach a defender of the Holy Sepulchre ?"

"Peace, my worthy guests," said Cedric ; "my hospitality must not be bounded by your dislikes. I constrain no man to converse or to feed with him. Let him have a board and a morsel apart."

Introduced with little ceremony, and advancing with fear and hesitation, and many a bow of deep humility, a tall thin old man approached the lower end of the board. His features, keen and regular, would have been considered as handsome, had they not been the marks of a physiognomy peculiar to a race which, during those dark ages, was alike detested by the credulous and prejudiced vulgar, and persecuted by the greedy and rapacious nobility.

The Jew's dress, which appeared to have suffered considerably from the storm, was a plain russet cloak of many folds, covering a dark purple tunic. He had large boots lined with fur, and a belt around his waist, which sustained a small knife, together with a case for writing materials. He wore a high square yellow cap of a peculiar fashion, assigned to his nation to distinguish them from Christians, and which he doffed with great humility at the door of the hall.

Cedric coldly nodded in answer to the Jew's repeated salutations, and signed to him to take place at the lower end of the table, where, however, no one offered to make room for him. The attendants of the Abbot crossed themselves with looks of pious horror, and the very heathen Saracens, as Isaac drew near them, curled up

their whiskers with indignation, and laid their hands on their poniards.

While Isaac thus stood an outcast in the present society, like his people among the nations, looking in vain for welcome or resting-place, the Pilgrim, who sat by the chimney, took compassion upon him, and resigned his seat, saying briefly, "Old man, my garments are dried, my hunger is appeased; thou art both wet and fasting." So saying, he gathered together and brought to a flame the decaying brands which lay scattered on the ample hearth; took from the larger board a mess of pottage and seethed kid, placed it upon the small table at which he had himself supped, and, without waiting the Jew's thanks, went to the other side of the hall.

Meanwhile the Abbot and Cedric continued their discourse upon hunting. "I marvel, worthy Cedric," said the Abbot, as their discourse proceeded, "that great as your predilection is for your own manly language, you do not receive the Norman-French into your favour, so far at least as the mystery of woodcraft and hunting is concerned."

"Good Father Aymer," said the Saxon, "be it known to you, I care not for those over-sea refinements, without which I can well enough take my pleasure in the woods."

"The French," said the Templar, "is not only the natural language of the chase, but that of love and of war, in which ladies should be won and enemies defied."

"Cupbearer! Knave!" said Cedric, "fill the goblets. To the strong in arms, Sir Templar, be their race or language what it will, who now bear them best in Palestine among the champions of the Cross."

"It becomes not one wearing this badge to answer," said Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert; "yet to whom, besides the sworn champions of the Holy Sepulchre, can the palm be assigned among the champions of the Cross?"

"To the Knights Hospitallers," said the Abbot; "I have a brother of their order."

"Were there, then, none in the English army," said the Lady Rowena, "whose names are worthy to be mentioned with the Knights of the Temple and of St. John?"

"Forgive me, lady," replied De Bois-Guilbert; "the English monarch did indeed bring to Palestine a host of gallant warriors, second only to those whose breasts have been the unceasing bulwark of that blessed land."

"Second to NONE," said the Pilgrim, who had stood near enough to hear, and had listened to this conversation with marked impatience.

All turned towards the spot from whence this unexpected asseveration was heard. "I say," repeated the Pilgrim in a firm and strong voice, "that the English chivalry were second to NONE who ever drew sword in defence of the Holy Land. I say besides, for I saw it, that King Richard himself, and five of his knights, held a tournament after the taking of St. John-de-Acre, as challengers against all comers. I say that, on that day, each knight ran three courses, and cast to the ground three antagonists. I add that seven of these assailants were Knights of the Temple ; and Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert well knows the truth of what I tell you."

It is impossible for language to describe the bitter scowl of rage which rendered yet darker the swarthy countenance of the Templar.

"I would give thee this golden bracelet, Pilgrim," Cedric said, "shouldst thou tell me the names of those knights who upheld so gallantly the renown of merry England."

"That will I do blithely," replied the Pilgrim. "The first in honour as in arms, in renown as in place, was the brave Richard, King of England."

"I forgive him," said Cedric ; "I forgive him his descent from the tyrant Duke William."

"The Earl of Leicester was the second," continued the Pilgrim. "Sir Thomas Multon of Gilsland was the third."

"Of Saxon descent, he at least," said Cedric, with exultation.

"Sir Foulk Doilly the fourth," proceeded the Pilgrim.

"Saxon also, at least by the mother's side," continued Cedric, who listened with the utmost eagerness. "And who was the fifth?" he demanded.

"The fifth was Sir Edwin Turneham."

"Genuine Saxon, by the soul of Hengist!" shouted Cedric. "And the sixth?" he continued with eagerness—"how name you the sixth?"

"The sixth," said the Palmer, after a pause, in which he seemed to recollect himself, "was a young Knight of lesser renown and lower rank. His name dwells not in my memory."

"Sir Palmer," said Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert scornfully, "this assumed forgetfulness, after so much has been remembered, comes too late to serve your purpose. I will myself tell the name of the Knight before whose lance fortune and my horse's fault occasioned my falling—it was the Knight of Ivanhoe; nor was there one of the six that, for his years, had more renown in arms. Yet this will I say,

and loudly, that were he in England, and durst repeat, in this week's tournament, the challenge of St. John-de-Acre, I would give him every advantage of weapons, and abide the result."

"Your challenge would be soon answered," replied the Palmer, "were your antagonist near you. As the matter is, disturb not the peaceful hall with vaunts of the issue of a conflict which you well know cannot take place. If Ivanhoe ever returns from Palestine, I will be his surety that he meets you."

"A goodly security!" said the Knight Templar, "and what do you proffer as a pledge?"

"This reliquary," said the Palmer, taking a small ivory box from his bosom, and crossing himself, "containing a portion of the true cross, brought from the monastery of Mount Carmel."

The Prior of Jorvaulx crossed himself and repeated a paternoster, in which all devoutly joined, excepting the Jew, the Mahomedans, and the Templar who took from his neck a gold chain, which he flung on the board, saying, "Let Prior Aymer hold my pledge and that of this nameless vagrant, in token that, when the Knight of Ivanhoe comes within the four seas of Britain, he underlies the challenge of Brian de Bois-Guilbert, which, if he answer not, I will

proclaim him as a coward on the walls of every Temple court in Europe."

"It will not need," said the Lady Rowena, breaking silence; "my voice shall be heard, if no other in this hall is raised, on behalf of the absent Ivanhoe. I affirm he will meet fairly every honourable challenge."

"Lady," said Cedric, "this beseems not; were further pledge necessary, I myself, offended, and justly offended, as I am, would yet gage my honour for the honour of Ivanhoe. But the wager of battle is complete, even according to the fantastic fashions of Norman chivalry. Is it not, Father Aymer?"

"It is," replied the Prior; "and the blessed relic and rich chain will I bestow safely in the treasury of our convent, until the decision of this warlike challenge. And now, Sir Cedric, my ears are chiming vespers with the strength of your good wine; permit us another pledge to the welfare of the Lady Rowena, and indulge us with liberty to pass to our repose."

The grace-cup was accordingly served round, and the guests, after making deep obeisance to their landlord and to the Lady Rowena, arose and mingled in the hall, while the heads of the family, by separate doors, retired with their attendance.

The Templar and the Prior were shortly after marshalled to their sleeping apartments by the steward and the cupbearer, each attended by two torch-bearers and two servants carrying refreshments, while servants of inferior condition indicated to their retinue and to the other guests their respective places of repose.

CHAPTER VI

As the Palmer, lighted by a domestic with a torch, passed through the intricate combination of apartments of this large and irregular mansion, he met an interruption from the waiting-maid of Rowena, who, saying in a tone of authority that her mistress desired to speak with him, took the torch from the hand of the attendant, and bidding him await her return, made a sign to the Palmer to follow.

A short passage, and an ascent of seven steps, each of which was composed of a solid beam of oak, led him to the apartment of the Lady Rowena, who, with three of her attendants

standing at her back, and arranging her hair, was seated on a high chair.

"Pilgrim," said the lady, after a moment's pause, during which she seemed uncertain how to address him, "you this night mentioned a name—I mean," she said with a degree of effort, "the name of Ivanhoe—in the halls where by nature and kindred it should have sounded most acceptably; and yet such is the perverse course of fate, that of many whose hearts must have throbbed at the sound, I only dare ask you where, and in what condition, you left him of whom you spoke."

"I know little of the Knight of Ivanhoe," answered the Palmer, with a troubled voice. "I would I knew him better, since you, lady, are interested in his fate. He is, I believe, on the eve of returning to England."

The Lady Rowena sighed deeply, and asked more particularly when the Knight of Ivanhoe might be expected in his native country.

"How looked he, stranger, when you last saw him? Had disease laid her hand heavy upon his strength and comeliness?"

"He was darker," said the Palmer, "and thinner than when he came from Cyprus in the train of Cœur-de-Lion, and care seemed to sit heavy on his brow."

"He will," said the lady, "I fear, find little in his native land to clear those clouds from his countenance. Thanks, good Pilgrim, for your information concerning the companion of my childhood."

"Accept this alms, friend," continued she, offering a piece of gold, "in acknowledgment of thy painful travail and of the shrines thou hast visited."

The Palmer received the boon with a low reverence, and followed Elgitha out of the apartment.

In the ante-room he found his attendant Anwold, who conducted him to an exterior and ignoble part of the building, where a number of small apartments served for sleeping-places to the lower order of domestics and to strangers of mean degree.

"In which of these sleeps the Jew?" said the Pilgrim.

"The unbelieving dog," answered Anwold, "kennels in the cell next your holiness."

"And where sleeps Gurth, the swineherd?" said the stranger.

"Gurth," replied the bondsman, "sleeps in the cell on your right, as the Jew in that to your left."

The Palmer then entered the cabin allotted to him and threw himself, without taking

off any part of his clothes, on the rude couch. He slept, or at least retained his recumbent posture, till the earliest sunbeams found their way through the little grated window. He then arose and after repeating his matins and adjusting his dress, he left the apartment, and entered that of Isaac the Jew, lifting the latch as gently as he could.

The old man started up, his grey hair standing almost erect upon his head; and huddling some part of his garments about him, he fixed upon the Palmer his keen black eyes, expressive of wild surprise and bodily apprehension.

"Fear nothing from me, Isaac," said the Palmer, "I come as your friend."

"The God of Israel requite you," said the Jew, greatly relieved; "I dreamed—but Father Abraham be praised, it was but a dream!" Then, collecting himself, he added in his usual tone, "And what may it be your pleasure to want at so early an hour with the poor Jew?"

"It is to tell you," said the Palmer, "that if you leave not this mansion instantly, and travel not with some haste, your journey may prove a dangerous one."

"Holy father!" said the Jew, "whom could it interest to endanger so poor a wretch as I am?"

"The purpose you can best guess," said the Pilgrim; "but rely on this, that when the Templar crossed the hall yesternight, he spoke to his Mussalman slaves in the Saracen language, which I well understand, and charged them this morning to watch the journey of the Jew, to seize upon him when at a convenient distance from the mansion, and to conduct him to the castle of Philip de Malvoisin or to that of Reginald Front-de-Bœuf."

It is impossible to describe the extremity of terror which seized upon the Jew at this information, and seemed at once to overpower his whole faculties. His arms fell down to his sides, his knees bent under his weight, and he sunk at the foot of the Palmer like a man borne down on all sides by the pressure of some invisible force.

"Stand up, Isaac, and hearken to me," said the Palmer; "I will point out to you the means of escape. Leave this mansion instantly. I will guide you by the secret paths of the forest, and I will not leave you till you are under safe conduct of some chief or baron going to the tournament, whose good-will you have probably the means of securing."

"*I* possess the means of securing good-will! Alas! there is but one road to the favour

of a Christian, and how can the poor Jew find it ? " Then, as if suspicion had overpowered his other feelings, he suddenly exclaimed, " For the love of God, young man, betray me not." As he spoke these last words, he raised himself and grasped the Palmer's mantle with a look of the most earnest entreaty.

" Wert thou loaded with all the wealth of all thy tribe," said the Pilgrim, "what interest have I to injure thee ? Think not that I care for thy company or propose myself advantage by it; remain here if thou wilt. Cedric the Saxon may protect thee."

"Alas ! " said the Jew, " he will not let me travel in his train; and to travel by myself through the domains of Philip de Malvoisin and Reginald Front-de-Bœuf—Good youth, I will go with you ! Let us haste, let us gird up our loins, let us flee. Here is thy staff, why wilt thou tarry ? "

"I tarry not," said the Pilgrim, giving way to the urgency of his companion, " but I must secure the means of leaving this place; follow me."

He led the way to the adjoining cell, which, as the reader is apprised, was occupied by Gurth, the swineherd. "Arise, Gurth," said the Pilgrim, "arise quickly. Undo the postern gate, and let out the Jew and me."

Gurth was offended at the familiar and commanding tone assumed by the Palmer. "The Jew leaving Rotherwood, and travelling in company with the Palmer to boot!" said he, raising himself on his elbow, without quitting his pallet. "Both Jew and Gentile must be content to abide the opening of the great gate; we suffer no visitors to depart by stealth at these unseasonable hours."

"Nevertheless," said the Pilgrim in a commanding tone, "you will not, I think, refuse me that favour."

So saying, he stooped over the bed of the recumbent swineherd, and whispered something in his ear in Saxon. Gurth started up as if electrified. The Pilgrim, raising his finger in an attitude as if to express caution, added, "Gurth, beware; thou art wont to be prudent. I say, undo the postern; thou shalt know more anon."

With hasty alacrity Gurth obeyed him, while the Jew followed, wondering at the sudden change in the swineherd's demeanour.

"My mule—my mule!" said the Jew, as soon as they stood without the postern.

"Fetch him his mule," said the Pilgrim, "and, hearest thou, let me have another, that I may bear him company till he is beyond these parts. I will return it safely to some of Cedric's

" I desire no recompense, " answered the Pilgrim. " If, among the huge list of thy debtors, thou wilt for my sake spare the gyves and the dungeon to some unhappy Christian who stands in thy danger, I shall hold this morning's service to thee to be well bestowed."

" Stay, stay," said the Jew, laying hold of his garment ; " something would I do more than this—something for thyself. Forgive me should I guess what thou most lackest at this moment. Thy wish even now is for a horse and armour."

The Palmer started, and turned suddenly towards the Jew. " What fiend prompted that guess ? " said he, hastily.

" No matter," said the Jew, smiling, " so that it be a true one ; and, as I can guess thy want, so I can supply it ;" and drawing forth his writing materials in haste, as if to stop the conversation, he began to write upon a piece of paper which he supported on the top of his yellow cap, without dismounting from his mule. When he had finished, he delivered the scroll, which was in the Hebrew character, to the Pilgrim saying, " In the town of Leicester all men know the rich Jew, Kirjath Jairam of Lombardy ; give him this scroll. He hath on sale six Milan harnesses, the worst would suit a crowned head ; ten goodly steeds, the worst might mount a king,

were he to do battle for his throne. Of these he will give thee thy choice, with everything else that can furnish thee forth for the tournament ; when it is over, thou wilt return them safely."

" But, Isaac," said the Pilgrim, smiling, " dost thou know that in these sports, the arms and steed of the knight who is unhorsed are forfeit to his victor ? Now I may be unfortunate, and so lose what I cannot replace or repay."

The Jew looked somewhat astounded at this possibility ; but collecting his courage, he replied hastily, " No—no—no—It is impossible—I will not think so. The blessing of our Father will be upon thee. Thy lance will be as powerful as the rod of Moses."

So saying, he was turning his mule's head away, when the Palmer, in his turn, took hold of his gaberdine. " Nay, but Isaac, thou knowest not all the risk. The steed may be slain, the armour injured."

The Jew twisted himself in the saddle, like a man in a fit of colic ; but his better feelings predominated over those which were most familiar to him. " I care not," he said—" I care not ; let me go. If there is damage, it will cost you nothing. Fare thee well ! Yet, hark thee, good youth, thrust thyself not too forward into this vain hurly-burly : I speak not for endanger-

ing the steed and coat of armour, but for the sake of thine own life and limbs."

"Gramercy for thy caution," said the Palmer, smiling; "I will use thy courtesy frankly, and it will go hard with me but I will requite it."

They parted, and took different roads for the town of Sheffield.

CHAPTER VII

The passage of arms, as it was called, which was to take place at Ashby, in the county of Leicester, had attracted universal attention, and an immense confluence of persons of all ranks hastened upon the appointed morning to the place of combat.

The scene was singularly romantic. On the verge of a wood, which approached to within a mile of the town of Ashby, was an extensive meadow, surrounded on one side by the forest, and fringed on the other by straggling oak trees. The ground sloped gradually down on all sides to a level bottom, which was enclosed for the

lists with strong palisades. The openings for the entry of the combatants were at the northern and southern extremities of the lists, accessible by strong wooden gates, each wide enough to admit two horsemen riding abreast. At each of these portals were stationed two heralds with attendants and a strong body of men-at-arms, for maintaining order, and ascertaining the quality of the knights who proposed to engage in this martial game.

On a platform beyond the southern entrance, formed by a natural elevation of the ground, were pitched five magnificent pavilions, adorned with pennons of russet and black, the chosen colours of the five knights challengers. Before each pavilion was suspended the shield of the knight by whom it was occupied, and beside it stood his squire. The central pavilion had been assigned to Brian de Bois-Guilbert, whose renown in all games of chivalry no less than his connexion with the knights who had undertaken this passage of arms, had occasioned him to be eagerly received into the company of the challengers, and even adopted as their chief and leader, though he had so recently joined them. On one side of his tent were pitched those of Reginald Front-de-Bœuf and Philip de Malvoisin, and on the other were the pavilions of two other knights.

The exterior of the lists was in part occupied by temporary galleries, spread with tapestry and carpets, and accommodated with cushions for the convenience of those ladies and nobles who were expected to attend the tournament. A narrow space betwixt these galleries and the lists gave accommodation for yeomanry and spectators of a better degree than the mere vulgar, and might be compared to the pit of a theatre. The promiscuous multitude arranged themselves upon large banks of turf prepared for the purpose, which, aided by the natural elevation of the ground, enabled them to overlook the galleries, and obtain a fair view into the lists.

One gallery in the very centre of the eastern side of the lists, and consequently exactly opposite to the spot where the shock of the combat was to take place, was raised higher than the others, more richly decorated, and graced by a sort of throne and canopy, on which the royal arms were emblazoned. Squires, pages, and yeomen, in rich liveries waited around this place of honour, which was designed for Prince John and his attendants. Opposite to this royal gallery was another, elevated to the same height, on the western side of the lists, and more gaily, if less sumptuously, decorated than that destined

for the Prince himself. A train of pages and of young maidens, the most beautiful who could be selected, gaily dressed in fancy habits of green and pink, surrounded a throne decorated in the same colours. This seat of honour was destined for the Queen of Beauty and of Love. But who was to represent the Queen no one was prepared to guess.

Gradually the galleries became filled with knights and nobles, in their robes of peace, whose long and rich-tinted mantles were contrasted with the gayer and more splendid habits of the ladies. The lower and interior space was soon filled by substantial yeomen and burghers, and such of the lesser gentry as from modesty, poverty, or dubious title, durst not assume any higher place. It was of course amongst these that the most frequent disputes for precedence occurred.

"Dog of an unbeliever," said an old man, whose threadbare tunic bore witness to his poverty, as his sword, and dagger, and golden chain intimated his pretensions to rank,—"darest thou press upon a Christian, and a Norman gentleman of the blood of Montdidier?"

This rough expostulation was addressed to no other than our acquaintance Isaac, who, richly dressed in a gaberdine ornamented with lace and lined with fur, was endeavouring to make place

in the foremost row beneath the gallery for his daughter, the beautiful Rebecca, who had joined him at Ashby, and who was now hanging on her father's arm, not a little terrified by the popular displeasure which seemed generally excited by her father's presumption. But Isaac, timid on other occasions, knew well that at present he had nothing to fear. It was not in places of general resort, or where their equals were assembled, that any avaricious or malevolent noble durst offer him injury. At such meetings the Jews were under the protection of the general law. On the present occasion, Isaac felt more than usually confident, being aware that Prince John was even then in the very act of negotiating a large loan from the Jews of York, to be secured upon certain jewels and lands. Isaac's own share in the transaction was considerable, and he well knew that the Prince's eager desire to bring it to a conclusion would ensure him his protection.

Emboldened by these considerations, the Jew pursued his point, and jostled the Norman Christian without respect either to his descent, quality or religion. The complaints of the old man, however, excited the indignation of the bystanders. One of these, a stout well-set yeoman, arrayed in Lincoln green, having twelve arrows stuck in his belt, and a bow six feet

long in his hand, turned short round, and advised the Jew to remember that all the wealth he had acquired by sucking the blood of his miserable victims had but swelled him like a bloated spider, which might be overlooked while it kept in a corner, but would be crushed if it ventured into the light. This intimation, delivered in Norman-English with a firm voice and a stern aspect, made the Jew shrink back ; and he would have probably withdrawn himself altogether from a vicinity so dangerous, had not the attention of every one been called to Prince John, who at that moment entered the lists with a numerous and gay train, consisting partly of laymen, partly of churchmen, as light in their dress, and as gay in their demeanour, as their companions. Among the latter was the Prior of Jorvaulx, in the most gallant trim which a dignitary of the Church could venture to exhibit. The rest of Prince John's retinue consisted of the favourite leaders of his mercenary troops, some marauding barons and profligate attendants upon the court, with several Knights Templars and Knights of St. John.

In his joyous caracole round the lists, the attention of the Prince was called by the commotion, not yet subsided, which had attended

the ambitious movement of Isaac towards the higher places of the assembly. The quick eye of Prince John instantly recognised the Jew, but was much more agreeably attracted by the beautiful daughter of Zion, who, terrified by the tumult, clung close to the arm of her aged father.

The figure of Rebecca might indeed have compared with the proudest beauties of England. Her form was exquisitely symmetrical, and was shown to advantage by a sort of Eastern dress, which she wore according to the fashion of the females of her nation. The brilliancy of her eyes, the superb arch of her eyebrows, her well-formed aquiline nose, her teeth as white as pearl, and the profusion of her sable tresses—all these constituted a combination of loveliness which yielded not to the most beautiful of the maidens who surrounded her.

"By the bald scalp of Abraham," said Prince John, "yonder Jewess must be the very model of perfection! What sayest thou, Prior Aymer?"

"The Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley," answered the Prior, in a sort of snuffling tone, "but your Grace must remember she is still but a Jewess."

"Ay," added Prince John without heeding him, "and there is my Mammon of unrighteous-

ness too—the Marquis of Marks, the Baron of Byzants, contesting for place with penniless dogs. By the body of St. Mark, my prince of supplies with his lovely Jewess shall have a place in the gallery ! What is she, Isaac ? Thy wife or thy daughter ? ''

'' My daughter Rebecca, so please your Grace,'' answered Isaac, with a low congee.

'' Who sits above there ? '' said John, bending his eye on the gallery. '' Saxon churls, lolling at their lazy length ! Out upon them ! let them sit close, and make room for my prince of usurers and his lovely daughter.''

Those who occupied the gallery, to whom this injurious and unpolite speech was addressed, were the family of Cedric the Saxon, with that of his ally and kinsman, Athelstane of Coningsburgh, a personage who, on account of his descent from the last Saxon monarchs of England, was held in the highest respect by all the Saxon natives of the north of England. But with the blood of this ancient royal race, many of their infirmities had descended to Athelstane. He was comely in countenance, bulky and strong in person, and in the flower of his age ; yet inanimate in expression, dull-eyed, heavy-browed, inactive and sluggish in all his motions, and so slow in resolution that the sobriquet of one of

his ancestors was conferred upon him, and he was very generally called Athelstane the Unready.

It was to this person that the Prince addressed his imperious command to make place for Isaac and Rebecca. Athelstane, utterly confounded at the order, opened his large grey eyes and stared at the Prince with an astonishment which had in it something extremely ludicrous. But the impatient John regarded it in no such light.

"The Saxon porker," he said, "is either asleep or minds me not. Prick him with your lance, De Bracy," speaking to a knight who rode near him, the leader of a band of free companions, that is, of mercenaries belonging to no particular nation, but attached for the time to any prince by whom they were paid. There was a murmur even among the attendants of Prince John ; but De Bracy, whose profession freed him from all scruples, extended his long lance over the space which separated the gallery from the lists, and would have executed the commands of the Prince before Athelstane the Unready had recovered presence of mind sufficient even to draw back his person from the weapon, had not Cedric, as prompt as his companion was tardy, unsheathed, with the speed of lightning, the short

sword which he wore, and at a single blow severed the point of the lance from the handle. The blood rushed into the countenance of Prince John. He swore one of his deepest oaths, and was about to utter some threat corresponding in violence, when he was diverted from his purpose, partly by his own attendants, who gathered around him conjuring him to be patient, partly by a general exclamation of the crowd, uttered in loud applause of the spirited conduct of Cedric. The Prince rolled his eyes in indignation, as if to collect some safe and easy victim ; and chancing to encounter the firm glance of the same archer whom we have already noticed, and who seemed to persist in his gesture of applause, inspite of the frowning aspect which the Prince bent upon him, he demanded his reason for clamouring thus.

" I always add my hollo," said the yeoman, " when I see a good shot or a gallant blow."

" Sayest thou ? " answered the Prince; " then thou canst hit the white thyself, I'll warrant."

" A woodsman's mark, and at woodsman's distance, I can hit," answered the yeoman.

" And Wat Tyrrel's mark, at a hundred yards," said a voice from behind, but by whom uttered could not be discerned.

This allusion to the fate of William Rufus, his grandfather, at once incensed and alarmed Prince John. He satisfied himself, however, with commanding the men-at-arms, who surrounded the lists, to keep an eye on the braggart, pointing to the yeoman.

"Meanwhile, stand up, ye Saxon churls," said the fiery Prince, "for, by the light of Heaven, since I have said it, the Jew shall have his seat amongst ye! Up, infidel dog!"

Thus urged, the Jew began to ascend the steep and narrow steps which led up to the gallery.

"Let me see," said the Prince, "who dare stop him!" fixing his eye on Cedric, whose attitude intimated his intention to hurl the Jew down headlong.

The catastrophe was prevented by the clown Wamba, who, springing betwixt his master and Isaac, and exclaiming, in answer to the Prince's defiance, "Marry, that will I!" opposed to the beard of the Jew a shield of brawn, which he plucked from beneath his cloak, and with which, doubtless, he had furnished himself lest the tournament should have proved longer than his appetite could endure abstinence. Finding the abomination of his tribe opposed to his very nose, while the Jester at the same time flourished his

wooden sword above his head, the Jew recoiled, missed his footing, and rolled down the steps—an excellent jest to the spectators, who set up a loud laughter, in which Prince John and his attendants heartily joined.

"Make room for the Jew in front of the lower ring," said Prince John, not unwilling, perhaps, to seize an apology to desist from his original purpose; "to place the vanquished beside the victor were false heraldry. Here, Isaac, lend me a handful of byzants."

As the Jew, stunned by the request, afraid to refuse and unwilling to pay, fumbled in the furred bag which hung by his girdle, the Prince stooped from his jennet and snatched the pouch itself from his side; and flinging to Wamba a couple of the gold pieces which it contained, he pursued his career round the lists.

CHAPTER VIII

In the midst of Prince John's cavalcade, he suddenly stopped and, appealing to the Prior of

Jorvaulx, declared the principal business of the day had been forgotten.

"By my halidom," said he, "we have forgotten, Sir Prior, to name the fair Sovereign of Love and of Beauty, by whose white hand the palm is to be distributed. For my part, I am liberal in my ideas, and I care not if I give my vote for the black-eyed Rebecca."

"Holy Virgin," answered the Prior, turning up his eyes in horror, "a Jewess! We should deserve to be stoned out of the lists; and I am not yet old enough to be a martyr. Besides, I swear by my patron saint that she is far inferior to the lovely Saxon, Rowena."

"Nay, nay," said De Bracy, "let the fair sovereign's throne remain unoccupied until the conqueror shall be named, and then let him choose the lady by whom it shall be filled. It will add another grace to his triumph, and teach fair ladies to prize the love of valiant knights, who can exalt them to such distinction."

The Prince acquiesced and, assuming his throne, gave signal to the heralds to proclaim the laws of the tournament, which were briefly as follows:

First, the five challengers were to undertake all comers.

Secondly, any knight proposing to combat might, if he pleased, select a special antagonist from among the challengers, by touching his shield. If he did so with the reverse of his lance, the trial of skill was made with what were called the arms of courtesy, that is, with lances at whose extremity a piece of round flat board was fixed, so that no danger was encountered, save from the shock of the horses and riders. But if the shield was touched with the sharp end of the lance, the knights were to fight with sharp weapons, as in actual battle.

Thirdly, when the knights present had accomplished their vow, by each of them breaking five lances, the Prince was to declare the victor in the first day's tourney, who should receive as prize a war-horse of exquisite beauty and matchless strength, and in addition to this reward of valour, he should have the peculiar honour of naming the Queen of Love and Beauty, by whom the prize should be given on the ensuing day.

Fourthly, it was announced that on the second day there should be a general tournament, in which all the knights present, who were desirous to win praise, might take part ; and, being divided into two bands, of equal numbers, might fight it out manfully until the signal was

given by Prince John to cease the combat. The elected Queen of Love and Beauty was then to crown the knight whom the Prince should adjudge to have borne himself best on this second day, with a coronet composed of thin gold plate, cut into the shape of a laurel crown.

On this second day the knightly games ceased. But on that which was to follow, feats of archery, of bull-baiting, and other popular amusements were to be practised, for the more immediate amusement of the populace.

The heralds finished their proclamation with their usual cry of "Largesse, largesse, gallant knights!" and gold and silver pieces were showered on them from the galleries. The heralds then withdrew from the lists in gay and glittering procession, and none remained within them save the marshals of the field, who, armed cap-à-pie, sat on horseback, motionless as statues, at the opposite ends of the lists. Meantime, the inclosed space at the northern extremity of the lists was completely crowded with knights desirous to prove their skill against the challengers.

At length the barriers were opened, and five knights, chosen by lot, advanced slowly into the area; a single champion riding in front, and the other four following in pairs. They advanced up the platform upon which the tents of the

challengers stood and, there separating themselves, each touched slightly, and with the reverse of the lance, the shield of the antagonist to whom he wished to oppose himself.

Having intimated their more pacific purpose, the challengers retreated to the extremity of the lists, where they remained drawn up in a line ; while the challengers, sallying each from his pavilion, mounted their horses, and, headed by Brian de Bois-Guilbert, descended from the platform and opposed themselves individually to the knights who had touched their respective shields.

At the flourish of clarions and trumpets, they started out against each other at full gallop ; and such was the superior dexterity or good fortune of the challengers, that those opposed to Bois-Guilbert, Malvoisin, and Front-de-Bœuf rolled on the ground. The antagonist of the fourth challenger instead of bearing his lance-point fair against the crest or the shield of his enemy, swerved so much from the direct line as to break the weapon athwart the person of his opponent—a circumstance which was accounted more disgraceful than that of being actually unhorsed ; because the latter might happen from accident, whereas the former evinced awkwardness and want of management of the weapon and of the horse. The fifth knight

alone maintained the honour of his party, and parted fairly with his antagonist, both splintering their lances without advantage on either side.

The shouts of the multitude, together with the acclamations of the heralds and the clangour of the trumpets announced the triumph of the victors, and the defeat of the vanquished. The former retreated to their pavilions, and the latter gathering themselves up as they could, withdrew from the lists in disgrace and dejection.

A second and a third party of knights took the field ; and although they had various success, yet, upon the whole, the advantage decidedly remained with the challengers, not one of whom lost his seat or swerved from his charge. The spirits, therefore, of those opposed to them seemed to be considerably damped by their continued success. Three knights only appeared on the fourth entry, who, avoiding the shields of Bois-Guilbert and Front-de-Bœuf, contented themselves with touching those of the three other knights who had not altogether manifested the same strength and dexterity. This politic selection did not alter the fortune of the field: the challengers were still successful.

After this fourth encounter, there was a considerable pause ; nor did it appear that any

one was very desirous of renewing the contest. The spectators murmured among themselves ; for, among the challengers, Malvoisin and Front-de-Bœuf were unpopular from their characters, and the others, except one, were disliked as strangers and foreigners.

" The day is against England, my lord," said Cedric to Athelstane ; " are you not tempted to take the lance ? "

" I shall tilt tomorrow," answered Athelstane, " in the *mêlée* ; it is not worth while for me to arm myself today."

The pause in the tournament was still uninterrupted, excepting by the voices of the heralds exclaiming—" Love of ladies, splintering of lances ! Stand forth, gallant knights, fair eyes look upon your deeds ! "

At length, as the Saracenic music of the challengers, which breathed from time to time wild bursts expressive of triumph or defiance, concluded one of those long and high flourishes with which they had broken the silence of the lists, it was answered by a solitary trumpet. All eyes were turned to see the new champion which these sounds announced, and no sooner were the barriers opened than he paced into the lists. As far as could be judged of a man sheathed in armour, the new adventurer

did not greatly exceed the middle size, and seemed to be rather slender than strongly made. His suit of armour was formed of steel, richly inlaid with gold, and the device on his shield was a young oak tree pulled up by the roots, with the Spanish word *Desdichado* signifying Disinherited. He was mounted on a gallant black horse, and as he passed through the lists he gracefully saluted the Prince and the ladies by lowering his lance. The dexterity with which he managed his steed, and something of youthful grace which he displayed in his manner, won him the favour of the multitude.

The champion ascended the platform by the sloping alley which led to it from the lists, and to the astonishment of all present, riding straight up to the central pavilion, struck with the sharp end of his spear the shield of Brian de Bois-Guilbert, until it rang again. All stood astonished at his presumption, but none more than the redoubted knight whom he had thus defied to mortal combat, and who, little expecting so rude a challenge, was standing carelessly at the door of the pavilion.

"Have you confessed yourself, brother," said the Templar, "that you peril your life so frankly ?"

"I am fitter to meet death than thou art," answered the Disinherited Knight ; for by this

name the stranger had recorded himself in the books of the tourney.

"Then take your place in the lists," said Bois-Guilbert, "and look your last upon the sun; for this night thou shalt sleep in paradise."

"Gramercy for thy courtesy," replied the Disinherited Knight, "and to requite it, I advise thee to take a fresh horse and a new lance, for by my honour you will need both."

Having expressed himself thus confidently, he reined his horse backward down the slope which he had ascended, and compelled him in the same manner to move backward through the lists, till he reached the northern extremity, where he remained stationary, in expectation of his antagonist. This feat of horsemanship again attracted the applause of the multitude.

However incensed at his adversary for the precautions which he recommended, Brian de Bois-Guilbert did not neglect his advice. He changed his horse for a proved and fresh one of great strength and spirit. He chose a new and a tough spear, he laid aside his shield, which had received some little damage, and received another from his squires.

The trumpets had no sooner given the signal, than the champions vanished from their posts with the speed of lightning, and closed in the

centre of the lists with the shock of a thunderbolt. The lances burst into shivers up to the very grasp, and it seemed at that moment that both knights had fallen, for the shock had made each horse recoil backwards upon its haunches. The address of the riders recovered their steeds by use of the bridle and spur; and having glared on each other for an instant, with eyes which seemed to flash fire through the bars of their visors, each made a demi-volte, and retiring to the extremity of the lists, received a fresh lance from the attendants.

A loud shout from the spectators, waving of scarfs and handkerchiefs, and general acclamations attested the interest taken by the spectators in the encounter, the most equal as well as the best performed, which had graced the day.

A few minutes' pause having been allowed, that the combatants and their horses might recover breath, Prince John with his truncheon signed to the trumpets to sound the onset. The champions a second time sprung from their stations, and closed in the centre of the lists, with the same speed and the same violence, but not the same equal fortune as before.

In this second encounter, the Templar aimed at the centre of his antagonist's shield, and struck it so fair and forci bly that his spear went to

shivers, and the Disinherited Knight reeled in his saddle. On the other hand, that champion had, in the beginning of his career, directed the point of his lance towards Bois-Guilbert's shield, but, changing his aim almost in the moment of encounter, he addressed it to the helmet, a mark more difficult to hit, but which, if attained, rendered the shock more irresistible. Fair and true he hit the Norman on the visor, where his lance's point kept hold of the bars. Yet, even at this disadvantage, the Templar sustained his high reputation; and had not the girths of his saddle burst, he might not have been unhorsed. As it chanced, however, saddle, horse, and man rolled on the ground under a cloud of dust.

To extricate himself from the stirrups and fallen steed, was to the Templar scarce the work of a moment; and, stung with madness, both at his disgrace and at the acclamations with which it was hailed by the spectators, he drew his sword and waved it in defiance of his conqueror. The Disinherited Knight sprung from his steed, and also unsheathed his sword. The marshals of the field, however, spurred their horses between them, and reminded them, that the laws of the tournament did not, on the present occasion, permit this species of encounter.

"We shall meet again, I trust," said the Templar, casting a resentful glance at his antagonist, "and where there are none to separate us."

"If we do not," said the Disinherited Knight, "the fault shall not be mine. On foot or horseback, with spear, with axe, or with sword, I am alike ready to encounter thee."

More and angrier words would have been exchanged, but the marshals, crossing their lances betwixt them, compelled them to separate. The Disinherited Knight returned to his first station, and Bois-Guilbert to his tent, where he remained for the rest of the day in an agony of despair.

Without alighting from his horse, the conqueror called for a bowl of wine, and opening the beaver, or lower part of his helmet, announced that he quaffed it, "To all English hearts, and to the confusion of foreign tyrants." He then commanded his trumpet to sound a defiance to the challengers.

The gigantic Front-de-Bœuf, armed in sable armour, was the first who took the field. Both knights broke their lances fairly, but Front-de-Bœuf, who lost a stirrup in the encounter, was adjudged to have the disadvantage.

In the stranger's third encounter with Sir Philip Malvoisin, he was equally successful.

In his combat with the fourth challenger, the Disinherited Knight showed as much courtesy as he had hitherto evinced courage and dexterity. His antagonist's horse reared and plunged in the course of the career so as to disturb the rider's aim, and the stranger, declining to take the advantage which this accident afforded him, raised his lance and passing his adversary without touching him, offered him, by a herald, the chance of a second encounter. This the other knight declined, avowing himself vanquished as much by the courtesy as by the address of his opponent.

The fifth challenger summed up the list of the stranger's triumphs, being hurled to the ground with such force that he was borne senseless from the lists.

The acclamations of thousands applauded the unanimous award of the Prince and marshals, announcing that day's honours to the Disinherited Knight.

CHAPTER IX

William de Wyvil and Stephen de Martival, the marshals of the field, were the first to offer their congratulations to the victor, praying him at the same time, to suffer his helmet to be unlaced, or, at least, that he would raise his visor ere they conducted him to receive the prize of the day's tourney from the hands of Prince John. The Disinherited Knight declined their request. The marshals pressed no further into the mystery of the Disinherited Knight, but, announcing to Prince John the conqueror's desire to remain unknown, they requested permission to bring him before his Grace, in order that he might receive the reward of his valour.

John's curiosity was excited by the mystery observed by the stranger. "Wot ye, my lords," he said, turning round to his train, "who this gallant can be that bears himself thus proudly?"

"I cannot guess," answered De Bracy, "nor did I think there had been within the four seas that girth Britain a champion that could bear down these five knights in one day's jousting."

"I can form no guess," said Waldemar Fitzurse, "unless he be one of the good lances who accompanied King Richard to Palestine, and

who are now straggling homeward from the Holy Land."

A whisper arose among the train, but by whom first suggested could not be ascertained,—"It might be the King—it might be Richard Cœur-de-Lion himself!"

"Over God's forbode!" said Prince John, involuntarily turning at the same time as pale as death; "Waldemar! De Bracy! brave knights and gentlemen, remember your promises, and stand truly by me."

"Here is no danger impending," said Waldemar Fitzurse; "are you so little acquainted with the gigantic limbs of your father's son, as to think they can be held within the circumference of yonder suit of armour? De Wyvil and Martival, you will best serve the Prince by bringing forward the victor to the throne, and ending an error that has conjured all the blood from his cheeks."

The marshals brought forward the Disinherited Knight to the foot of a wooden flight of steps, which formed the ascent from the lists to Prince John's throne. With a short and embarrassed eulogy upon his valour, the Prince caused to be delivered to him the war-horse assigned as the prize.

The Disinherited Knight spoke not a word in reply to the compliment of the Prince, which

he only acknowledged with a profound obeisance.

The horse was led into the lists by two grooms richly dressed. Laying one hand upon the pommel of the saddle, the Disinherited Knight vaulted at once upon its back without making use of the stirrup, and, brandishing aloft his lance, rode twice around the lists, exhibiting the points and paces of the horse with the skill of a perfect horseman.

In the meanwhile, the bustling Prior of Jorvaulx had reminded Prince John, in a whisper, that the victor must now display his good judgment, instead of his valour, by selecting from among the beauties who graced the galleries a lady who should fill the throne of the Queen of Beauty and of Love, and deliver the prize of the tourney upon the ensuing day. The Prince accordingly made a sign with his truncheon as the knight passed him in his second career around the lists. The knight turned towards the throne, and, sinking his lance until the point was within a foot of the ground, remained motionless, as if expecting John's commands; while all admired the sudden dexterity with which he instantly reduced his fiery steed from a state of high excitation to the stillness of an equestrian statue.

"Sir Disinherited Knight," said Prince John, "since that is the only title by which we can address you, it is now your duty, as well as privilege, to name the fair lady who, as Queen of Honour and of Love, is to preside over next day's festival. Raise your lance."

The knight obeyed ; and Prince John placed upon its point a coronet of green satin, having around its edge a circlet of gold.

The Disinherited Knight paced forward as slowly as he had hitherto ridden swiftly around the lists, and seemed to exercise his right of examining the numerous fair faces which adorned that splendid circle.

At length he paused beneath the balcony in which the Lady Rowena was placed. He remained stationary for more than a minute, while the eyes of the silent audience were riveted upon his motions ; and then, gradually and gracefully sinking the point of his lance, he deposited the coronet which it supported at the feet of the fair Rowena. The trumpets instantly sounded, while the heralds proclaimed the Lady Rowena the Queen of Beauty and of Love for the ensuing day, menacing with suitable penalties those who should be disobedient to her authority.

There was some murmuring among the damsels of Norman descent, who were as much

unused to see the preference given to a Saxon beauty, as the Norman nobles were to sustain defeat in the games of chivalry which they themselves had introduced. But these sounds of disaffection were drowned by the popular shout of "Long live the Lady Rowena, the chosen and lawful Queen of Love and of Beauty!" To which many in the lower area added, "Long live the Saxon Princess! Long live the race of the immortal Alfred!"

However unacceptable those sounds might be to Prince John and to those around him, he saw himself nevertheless obliged to confirm the nomination of the victor. Mounting his jennet, he made the animal bound forward to the gallery where Rowena was seated, with the crown still at her feet.

"Assume," he said, "fair lady, the mark of your sovereignty, to which none vows homage more sincerely than ourself, John of Anjou; and if it please you today, with your noble sire and friends, to grace our banquet in the Castle of Ashby, we shall learn to know the empress to whose service we devote tomorrow."

Rowena remained silent, and Cedric answered for her in his native Saxon.

"The Lady Rowena," he said, "possesses not the language in which to reply to your

courtesy, or to sustain her part in your festival. I also, and the noble Athelstane of Coningsburgh speak only the language, and practise only the manners, of our fathers. We therefore decline with thanks your Highness's courteous invitation to the banquet. Tomorrow, the Lady Rowena will take upon her the state to which she has been called by the free election of the victor knight, confirmed by the acclamations of the people."

So saying he lifted the coronet and placed it upon Rowena's head, in token of her acceptance of the temporary authority assigned to her.

"What says he?" said Prince John, affecting not to understand the Saxon language, in which, however, he was well skilled. The purport of Cedric's speech was repeated to him in French. "It is well," he said; "tomorrow we will ourself conduct this mute sovereign to her seat of dignity.—You, at least, Sir Knight," he added, turning to the victor, who had remained near the gallery, "will this day share our banquet?"

The Knight, speaking for the first time, in a low and hurried voice, excused himself by pleading fatigue, and the necessity of preparing for tomorrow's encounter.

"It is well," said Prince John, haughtily; "although unused to such refusals, we will

endeavour to digest our banquet as we may, though ungraced by the most successful in arms and his elected Queen of Beauty."

So saying, he prepared to leave the lists with his glittering train, and his turning his steed for that purpose was the signal for the breaking up and dispersion of the spectators.

Yet John had hardly proceeded three paces, ere again, turning around, he fixed an eye of stern resentment upon the yeoman who had displeased him in the early part of the day, and issued his commands to the men-at-arms who stood near :— " On your life, suffer not that fellow to escape."

The yeoman stood the angry glance of the Prince with the same unvaried steadiness which had marked his former deportment, saying, with a smile, " I have no intention to leave Ashby until the day after tomorrow. I must see how Staffordshire and Leicestershire can draw their bows ; the forests of Needwood and Charnwood must rear good archers."

" I," said Prince John to his attendants, but not in direct reply,—" I will see how he can draw his own ; and woe betide him unless his skill should prove some apology for his insolence! "

He resumed his retreat from the lists, and the dispersion of the multitude became general.

CHAPTER X

The Disinherited Knight had no sooner reached his pavilion than squires and pages in abundance tendered their services. The knight, however, refused all other assistance save that of his own squire or, rather yeoman—a clownish-looking man, who wrapt in a cloak of dark-coloured felt, and having his head and face half-buried in a Norman bonnet made of black fur, seemed to affect the incognito as much as his master. All others being excluded from the tent, this attendant relieved his master from the more burdensome parts of his armour, and placed food and wine before him, which the exertions of the day rendered very acceptable.

The knight had scarcely finished a hasty meal ere his menial announced to him that five men, each bearing a barbed steed, desired to speak with him.

He stepped forth to the front of his tent, and found in attendance the squires of the challengers, each of whom led his master's charger, loaded with the armour in which he had that day fought.

"According to the laws of chivalry," said the foremost of these men, "I, Baldwin de

Oyley, squire to the redoubted Knight Brian de Bois-Guilbert, offer to you the horse and armour used by the said Brian de Bois-Guilbert in this day's passage of arms, leaving it with your nobleness to retain or to ransom the same, according to your pleasure ; for such is the law of arms."

The other squires repeated nearly the same formula, and they stood to await the decision of the Disinherited Knight.

" We stand commissioned, each of us, " added the squire of Reginald Front-de-Bœuf, " to offer a hundred zecchins in ransom of these horses and suits of armour."

" It is sufficient," said the Disinherited Knight, addressing those who had last spoken. " Half the sum my present necessities compel me to accept ; of the remaining half, distribute one moiety among yourselves, sir squires, and divide the other half betwixt the heralds and the pursuivants and minstrels, and attendants."

The squires, with cap in hand, and low reverences, expressed their deep sense of a courtesy and generosity not often practised, at least upon a scale so extensive. The Disinherited Knight then addressed his discourse to Baldwin, the squire of Brian de Bois-Guilbert. " From your master," said he, " I will accept neither arms

nor ransom. Say to him in my name, that our strife is not ended—no, not till we have fought as well with swords as with lances, as well on foot as on horseback. To this mortal quarrel he has himself defied me, and I shall not forget the challenge."

Baldwin made a deep obeisance, and retired with his companions; and the Disinherited Knight entered the pavilion.

"Thus far, Gurth," said he, addressing his attendant, "the reputation of English chivalry hath not suffered in my hands."

"And I," said Gurth, "for a Saxon swine-herd, have not ill played the part of a Norman squire-at-arms."

"Take this bag of gold to Ashby," said his master, "and find out Isaac the Jew of York, and let him pay himself for the horse and arms with which his credit supplied me."

We must now change the scene to a country house in the vicinity of Ashby, belonging to a wealthy Israelite, with whom Isaac, his daughter, and retinue had taken up their quarters.

In an apartment, richly furnished with decorations of an Oriental taste Rebecca was seated on a heap of embroidered cushions. She was watching the motions of her father with a look of anxious and filial affection, while

he paced the apartment with a dejected mien and disordered step.

"O Jacob!" he exclaimed, "fifty zecchins wrenched from me at one clutch, and by the talons of a tyrant!—O, daughter, disinherited and wandering as we are, the worst evil which befalls our race is, that when we are wronged and plundered all the world laughs around, and we are compelled to suppress our sense of injury, and to smile tamely when we would revenge bravely."

"Think not thus of it," my father, said Rebecca, "we also have advantages. Without the aid of our wealth, they could neither furnish forth their hosts in war nor their triumphs in peace; and the gold which we lend them returns with increase to our coffers. We are like the herb which flourisheth most when it is most trampled on. Even this day's pageant had not proceeded without the consent of the despised Jew, who furnished the means."

"Daughter," said Isaac, "thou hast harped upon another string of sorrow. The goodly steed and the rich armour, equal to the full profit of my adventure with our Kirjath Jairam of Leicester—there is a dead loss too—and yet it may end better than I now think, for it is a good youth."

"Assuredly," said Rebecca, "you shall not repent you of requiting the good deed received of the stranger knight."

"I trust so, daughter," said Isaac, "and I trust too in the rebuilding of Zion; but as well do I hope with my own bodily eyes to see the walls and battlements of the new Temple, as to see a Christian willingly repay a debt to a Jew."

So saying he resumed his discontented walk through the apartment; and Rebecca, perceiving that her attempts at consolation only served to awaken new subjects of complaint, wisely desisted from her unavailing efforts.

The evening was now becoming dark, when a Jewish servant entered the apartment and placed upon the table two silver lamps, fed with perfumed oil. At the same time he informed Isaac that a Nazarene (so they termed Christians while conversing among themselves) desired to speak with him. Isaac, saying hastily to his daughter, "Rebecca, veil thyself," commanded the stranger to be admitted.

Just as Rebecca had dropped over her fine features a screen of silver gauze which reached to her feet, the door opened, and Gurth entered, wrapped in the ample folds of his Norman mantle.

"Art thou Isaac the Jew of York?" said he in Saxon.

"I am," replied Isaac, in the same language, "and who art thou?"

"That is not to the purpose," answered Gurth.

"As much as my name is to thee," replied Isaac, "for, without knowing thine, how can I hold intercourse with thee?"

"Easily," answered Gurth; "I, being to pay money, must know that I deliver it to the right person; thou, who art to receive it, wilt not, I think, care very greatly by whose hands it is delivered."

"O," said the Jew, "you are come to pay monies?—Holy Father Abraham! that altereth our relation to each other. And from whom dost thou bring it?"

"From the Disinherited Knight," said Gurth, "victor in this day's tournament. It is the price of the armour supplied to him by Kirjath Jairam of Leicester, on thy recommendation. The steed is restored to thy stable. I desire to know the amount of the sum which I am to pay for the armour."

"I said he was a good youth!" exclaimed Isaac, with joyful exultation. "How much money hast thou brought with thee?"

"Even but a small sum," said Gurth, "something in hand the whilst. What, Isaac! thou must bear a conscience, though it be a Jewish one."

"Well," said Isaac, panting and hesitating between habitual love of gain and a new-born desire to be liberal, "if I should say that I would take eighty zecchins for the good steed and rich armour, which leaves me not a guilder's profit, have you money to pay me?"

"Barely," said Gurth, though the sum demanded was more reasonable than he expected, "and it will leave my master nearly penniless. Nevertheless, if such be your least offer, I must be content."

"Fill thyself a goblet of wine," said the Jew. "Ah! eighty zecchins is too little. It leaveth no profit for the usages of the monies; and, besides, the good horse may have suffered wrong in this day's encounter."

"And I say," replied Gurth, "he is sound, wind and limb; and seventy zecchins is enough for the armour. If you will not take seventy, I will carry this bag (and he shook it till the contents jingled) back to my master."

"Nay, nay!" said Isaac, "lay down the eighty zecchins."

Gurth at length complied; and telling out eighty zecchins upon the table, the Jew delivered

out to him an acquittance for the horse and suit of armour. Gurth put it under his cap, and left the apartment without ceremony.

He had descended the stair, and was puzzling about to discover the entrance, when a figure in white beckoned him into a side apartment. After a moment's pause, he obeyed the beckoning summons of the apparition, and followed her into the apartment which she indicated, where he found, to his surprise, that his fair guide was the beautiful Jewess whom he had seen at the tournament and in her father's apartment.

She asked him the particulars of his transaction with Isaac, which he detailed accurately.

"My father did but jest with thee, good fellow," said Rebecca, "he owes thy master deeper kindness than those arms and steeds could pay, were their value tenfold. What sum didst thou pay my father even now?

"Eighty zecchins," said Gurth, surprised at the question.

"In this purse," said Rebecca, "thou wilt find a hundred. Restore to thy master that which is his due, and enrich thyself with the remainder. Haste—begone—stay not to render thanks."

" By St. Dunstan," said Gurth, as he stumbled up the dark avenue leading out of the house, " this is no Jewess, but an angel from heaven. Oh, happy day! Such another, and I lay down my swineherd's horn and staff, and take the freeman's sword and buckler, and follow my young master to death, without hiding either my face or my name."

CHAPTER XI

Morning arose in unclouded splendour, and ere the sun was much above the horizon, the idlest or the most eager of the spectators appeared on the common. The marshals and their attendants appeared next on the field, together with the heralds, for the purpose of receiving the names of the knights who intended to joust, with the side which each chose to espouse.

According to due formality, the Disinherited Knight was to be considered as leader of one body, while Brian de Bois-Guilbert, who had been rated as having done second best on the

preceding day, was named first champion of the other band. There was no want of distinguished and noble candidates to fill up the ranks on either side; but when about fifty knights were inscribed as desirous of combating upon each side, the marshals declared that no more could be admitted.

About the hour of ten o'clock, the whole plain was crowded with horsemen, horsewomen, and foot-passengers, hastening to the tournament; and, shortly after, a grand flourish of trumpets announced Prince John and his retinue.

About the same time arrived Cedric the Saxon, with the Lady Rowena, unattended, however, by Athelstane. This Saxon lord had arrayed his tall and strong person in armour, in order to take his place among the combatants, and, considerably to the surprise of Cedric, had chosen to enlist himself on the part of the Knight Templar.

Athelstane considered his union with the Lady Rowena as a matter already fixed beyond doubt, by the assent of Cedric and her other friends. It had therefore been with smothered displeasure that the proud though indolent Lord of Coningsburgh beheld the victor of the preceding day select Rowena as the object of that honour which it became his privilege to confer. In order

to punish him for a preference which seemed to interfere with his own suit, Athelstane, confident of his strength, had determined not only to deprive the Disinherited Knight of his powerful succour, but, if an opportunity should occur, to make him feel the weight of his battle-axe.

As soon as Prince John observed that the destined Queen of the day had arrived upon the field, he rode forward to meet her, doffed his bonnet, and, alighting from his horse, assisted the Lady Rowena from her saddle, and marshalled her to the seat of honour opposite his own.

No sooner was she seated than a burst of music, half-drowned by the shouts of the multitude, greeted her new dignity. The heralds then proclaimed silence until the laws of the tourney should be rehearsed. The champions were forbidden to thrust with the sword, and were confined to striking. A knight, it was announced, might use a mace or battle-axe at pleasure; but the dagger was a prohibited weapon. A knight unhorsed might renew the fight on foot with any other on the opposite side in the same predicament; but mounted horsemen were in that case forbidden to assail him. When any knight could force his antagonist to the extremity of the lists, so as to touch the palisade with his

person or arms, such opponent was obliged to yield himself vanquished, and his armour and horse were placed at the disposal of the conqueror. If any combatant was struck down, and unable to recover his feet, his squire or page might enter the lists and drag his master out of the press; but, in that case, the knight was adjudged vanquished, and his arms and horse declared forfeited. The combat was to cease as soon as Prince John should throw down his leading staff or truncheon.

This proclamation having been made, the heralds withdrew to their stations. The knights, entering at either end of the lists, in long procession, arranged themselves in a double file, precisely opposite to each other, the leader of each party being in the centre of the foremost rank. They held their long lances upright, their bright points glancing to the sun, and the streamers with which they were decorated fluttering over the plumage of the helmets.

Thus they remained while the marshals of the field surveyed their ranks with the utmost exactness, lest either party had more or fewer than the appointed number. The tale was found exactly complete. The marshals then withdrew from the lists, and William de Wyvil, with a voice of thunder, pronounced the signal words—

"*Laissez aller!*" The trumpets sounded as he spoke; the spears of the champions were at once lowered and placed in the rests; the spurs were dashed into the flanks of the horses; and the two foremost ranks of either party rushed upon each other in full gallop, and met in the middle of the lists with a shock the sound of which was heard at a mile's distance.

Amid the varied fortunes of the combat, the eyes of all endeavoured to discover the leaders of each band, who encouraged their companions both by voice and example. Both displayed great feats of gallantry, nor did either Bois-Guilbert or the Disinherited Knight find in the ranks opposed to them a champion who could be termed their unquestioned match.

When the field became thin by the numbers on either side who had been rendered incapable of continuing the strife, the Templar and the Disinherited Knight at length encountered hand to hand, with all the fury that mortal animosity could inspire. Such was the address of each in parrying and striking that the spectators broke forth into a unanimous and involuntary shout, expressive of their delight and admiration.

But at this moment the party of the Disinherited Knight had the worst; the gigantic

arm of Front-de-Bœuf on one flank, and the ponderous strength of Athelstane on the other bearing down and dispersing those immediately exposed to them. Finding themselves freed from their immediate antagonists, it seems to have occurred to both these knights at the same instant, that they would render the most decisive advantage to their party by aiding the Templar in his contest with his rival. Turning their horses, therefore, at the same moment, the Norman spurred against the Disinherited Knight on one side and the Saxon on the other.

"Beware! beware! Sir Disinherited!" was shouted so universally that the knight became aware of his danger; and striking a full blow at the Templar, he reined back his steed in the same moment, so as to escape the charge of Athelstane and Front-de-Bœuf. These knights, therefore, their aim being thus eluded, rushed from opposite sides betwixt the object of their attack and the Templar, almost running their horses against each other ere they could stop their career. Recovering their horses, however, and wheeling them round, all three pursued their united purpose of bearing to the earth the Disinherited Knight.

The masterly horsemanship of the latter and the activity of the noble animal which he

mounted, enabled him for a few minutes to keep at sword's point his three antagonists.

But although the lists rang with the applauses of his dexterity, it was evident that he must at last be overpowered ; and the nobles around Prince John implored him with one voice to throw down his warder, and to save so brave a knight from the disgrace of being overcome by odds.

" Not I, by the light of heaven ! " answered Prince John, " this same springal, who conceals his name and despises our proffered hospitality, has already gained one prize, and may now afford to let others have their turn." As he spoke thus, an unexpected incident changed the fortune of the day.

There was among the ranks of the Disinherited Knight a champion in black armour, mounted on a black horse, large of size, tall, and to all appearance powerful and strong, like the rider by whom he was mounted. This knight, who bore on his shield no device of any kind, had hitherto evinced very little interest in the event of the fight. He had hitherto acted the part rather of a spectator than of a party in the tournament, a circumstance which procured him among the spectators the name of The Black Sluggard.

At once this knight seemed to throw aside his apathy, when he discovered the leader of his party so hard bestead ; for setting spurs to his horse, which was quite fresh, he came to his assistance like a thunderbolt, exclaiming, in a voice like a trumpet-call, " *Desdichado*, to the rescue ! " It was high time ; for, while the Disinherited Knight was pressing upon the Templar, Front-de-Bœuf had got nigh to him with his uplifted sword ; but ere the blow could descend, the Sable Knight dealt a stroke on the head, and Front-de-Bœuf rolled on the ground, both horse and man equally stunned by the fury of the blow. " The Black Sluggard " then turned his horse upon Athelstane of Coningsburgh ; and his own sword having been broken in his encounter with Front-de-Bœuf, he wrenched from the hand of the bulky Saxon the battle-axe which he wielded, and, like one familiar with the use of the weapon, bestowed him such a blow upon the crest that Athelstane also lay senseless on the field.

Having achieved this double feat, the knight seemed to resume the sluggishness of his character, returning calmly to the northern extremity of the lists, leaving his leader to cope as he best could with Brian de Bois-Guilbert. This was no longer a matter of so much difficulty as formerly. The

Templar's horse had bled much, and gave way under the shock of the Disinherited Knight's charge. Brian de Bois-Guilbert rolled on the field, encumbered with the stirrup, from which he was unable to draw his foot. His antagonist sprang from horseback, waved his fatal sword over the head of his adversary, and commanded him to yield himself; when Prince John, more moved by the Templar's dangerous situation than he had been by that of his rival, saved him the mortification of confessing himself vanquished, by casting down his warder and putting an end to the conflict.

It being now the duty of Prince John to name the knight who had done best, he determined that the honour of the day remained with the knight whom the popular voice had termed The Black Sluggard.

To the surprise of all present, however, the knight thus preferred was nowhere to be found. He had left the lists immediately when the conflict ceased. Prince John had now no further excuse for resisting the claim of the Disinherited Knight, whom, therefore, he named the champion of the day.

Through a field slippery with blood and encumbered with broken armour and the bodies of slain and wounded horses, the marshals of the

lists again conducted the victor to the foot of Prince John's throne.

"Disinherited Knight," said Prince John, "we a second time award to you the honours of this tournament, and announce to you your right to claim and receive from the hands of the Queen of Love and Beauty the chaplet of honour which your valour has justly deserved." The knight bowed low and gracefully, but returned no answer.

The marshals conducted the Disinherited Knight across the lists to the foot of that throne of honour which was occupied by the Lady Rowena. Rowena, descending from her station with a graceful and dignified step, was about to place the chaplet which she held in her hand upon the helmet of the champion, when the marshals exclaimed with one voice, "It must not be thus; his head must be bare." The knight muttered faintly a few words, which were lost in the hollow of the helmet; but their purport seemed to be a desire that his casque might not be removed.

Whether from love of form or from curiosity, the marshals paid no attention to his expressions of reluctance, but unhelmed him by cutting the laces of his casque, and undoing the fastening of his gorget. When the helmet was removed, the well-formed yet sun-burnt features of a young man of twenty-five were seen, amidst a profusion

of short fair hair. His countenance was as pale as death, and was marked in one or two places with streaks of blood.

Rowena had no sooner beheld him than she uttered a faint shriek ; but at once summoning up the energy of her disposition, she placed upon the drooping head of the victor the splendid chaplet which was the destined reward of the day and pronounced in a clear and distinct tone these words: "I bestow on thee this chaplet, Sir Knight, as the meed of valour assigned to this day's victor." Here she paused a moment, and then firmly added, "And upon brows more worthy could a wreath of chivalry never be placed."

The knight stooped his head and kissed the hand of the lovely Sovereign by whom his valour had been rewarded ; and then, sinking yet farther forward, lay prostrate at her feet.

There was a general consternation. Cedric, who had been struck mute by the sudden appearance of his banished son, now rushed forward, as if to separate him from Rowena. But this had been already accomplished by the marshals of the field, who, guessing the cause of Ivanhoe's swoon, had hastened to undo his armour, and found that the head of a lance had penetrated his breastplate and inflicted a wound in his side.

CHAPTER XII

The name of Ivanhoe was no sooner pronounced than it flew from mouth to mouth, and it was not long ere it reached the circle of the Prince whose brow darkened as he heard the news.

He was about to give the signal for retiring from the lists, when a small billet was put into his hand.

"From whence?" said Prince John, looking at the person by whom it was delivered.

"From foreign parts, my lord; but from whence I know not," replied his attendant. "A Frenchman brought it hither, who said he had ridden night and day to put it into the hands of your Highness."

John opened the billet with apparent agitation, which visibly and greatly increased, when he had perused the contents, which were expressed in these words—

"Take heed to yourself, for the Devil is unchained!"

The Prince turned as pale as death, and taking Waldemar Fitzurse and De Bracy aside, he put the billet into their hands successively. "It means," he added in a faltering voice,

" that my brother Richard has obtained his freedom."

" This may be a false alarm or a forged letter," said De Bracy.

" It is France's own hand and seal," replied Prince John.

" It is time, then," said Fitzurse, " to draw our party to a head, either at York or some other central place. A few days later, and it will be indeed too late. Your Highness must break short this present mummery."

" The yeomen and commons," said De Bracy, " must not be dismissed discontented, for lack of their share in the sports."

" The day," said Waldemar, " is not yet very far spent ; let the archers shoot a few rounds at the target, and the prize be adjudged. This will be an abundant fulfilment of the Prince's promises, so far as this herd of Saxon serfs is concerned."

" I thank thee, Waldemar," said the Prince, " thou remindest me, too, that I have a debt to pay to that insolent peasant who yesterday insulted our person. Our banquet also shall go forward tonight as we proposed."

The sound of the trumpets soon recalled those spectators who had already begun to leave the field ; and proclamation was made that Prince

John, suddenly called by high and peremptory public duties, held himself obliged to discontinue the entertainments of tomorrow's festival; nevertheless, that, unwilling so many good yeomen should depart without a trial of skill, he was pleased to appoint them, before leaving the ground, presently to execute the competition of archery intended for the morrow. To the best archer a prize was to be awarded, being a bugle-horn, mounted with silver, and a silken baldric richly ornamented with a medallion of Saint Hubert, the patron of silvan sport.

More than thirty yeomen at first presented themselves as competitors. When, however, the archers understood with whom they were to be matched, upwards of twenty withdrew themselves from the contest, unwilling to encounter the dishonour of almost certain defeat.

Prince John looked for the object of his resentment, whom he observed standing at the same spot, and with the same composed countenance which he had exhibited upon the preceding day.

"Fellow," said the Prince, "I guessed by thy insolent babble thou wert no true lover of the long-bow, and I see thou darest not adventure thy skill among such merry men as stand yonder. What is thy name?"

"Locksley," answered the yeoman.

"Then, Locksley," said Prince John, "thou shalt shoot in thy turn, when these yeomen have displayed their skill. If thou carriest the prize, I will add to it twenty nobles; but if thou losest it, thou shalt be stripped of thy Lincoln green and scourged out of the lists with bowstrings, for a wordy and insolent braggart."

"This is no fair chance you put on me, proud Prince," said the yeoman. "Nevertheless, I will obey your pleasure."

A target was now placed at the upper end of the southern avenue which led to the lists. The contending archers, who were eight in number, took their station in turn, and, stepping forward one by one, they each delivered three shafts yeomanlike and bravely. Of twenty-four arrows, shot in succession, ten were fixed in the target, and the others ranged so near it that, considering the distance of the mark, it was accounted good archery. Of the ten shafts which hit the target, two within the inner ring were shot by Hubert, a forester in the service of Malvoisin, who was accordingly pronounced victorious.

"Now, Locksley," said Prince John to the bold yeoman, with a bitter smile, "wilt thou try conclusions with Hubert, or wilt thou yield up

bow, baldric and quiver to the Provost of the sports ?"

"Since it can be no better," said Locksley, "I am content to try my fortune; on condition that when I have shot two shafts at yonder mark of Hubert's, he shall be bound to shoot one at that which I shall propose."

"That is but fair," answered Prince John, "and it shall not be refused thee.—If thou dost beat this braggart, Hubert, I will fill the bugle with silver pennies for thee."

"A man can do but his best," answered Hubert; "but my grandsire drew a good long-bow at Hastings, and I trust not to dishonour his memory."

The former target was now removed, and a fresh one of the same size placed in its room. Hubert, who, as victor in the first trial of skill, had the right to shoot first. The arrow whistled through the air, and lighted on the inner ring of the target, but not exactly in the centre.

"You have not allowed for the wind, Hubert," said his antagonist, bending his bow, "or that had been a better shot."

So saying, and without showing the least anxiety to pause upon his aim, Locksley stept to the appointed station, and shot his arrow as carelessly in appearance as if he had not even

looked at the mark. It alighted in the target two inches nearer to the white spot which marked the centre than that of Hubert.

"By the light of Heaven!" said Prince John to Hubert, "if thou suffer that runagate knave to overcome thee, thou art worthy of the gallows!"

Hubert had but one set speech for all occasions. "If your Highness were to hang me," he said, "a man can but do his best. Nevertheless my grandsire drew a good bow—"

"The foul fiend on thy grandsire and all his generation!" interrupted John. "Shoot, knave, and shoot thy best, or it shall be worse for thee!"

Hubert resumed his place, and shot so successfully that his arrow alighted in the very centre of the target.

"A Hubert! a Hubert!" shouted the populace more interested in a known person than in a stranger. "In the clout!—in the clout!—a Hubert for ever!"

"Thou canst not mend that shot, Locksley," said the Prince, with an insulting smile.

"I will notch his shaft for him, however," replied Locksley.

And letting fly his arrow with a little more precaution than before, he made it light upon that

of his competitor, which it split to shivers. The people who stood around were so astonished at his wonderful dexterity that they could not even give vent to their surprise in their usual clamour. "This must be the devil, and no man of flesh and blood," whispered the yeomen to each other; "such archery was never seen since a bow was first bent in Britain."

"And now," said Locksley, "I will crave your Grace's permission to plant such a mark as is used in the North Country."

He then turned to leave the lists, and returned almost instantly with a willow wand about six feet in length, perfectly straight, and rather thicker than a man's thumb. He began to peel this with great composure. "A child of seven years old," he said, "might hit yonder target with a headless shaft; but," added he, walking deliberately to the other end of the lists, and sticking the willow wand upright in the ground, "he that hits that rod at fivescore yards, I call him an archer fit to bear both bow and quiver before a king,—if it were the stout King Richard himself."

"A man can but do his best," said Hubert, "and I will not shoot where I am sure to miss."

"Cowardly dog!" said Prince John. "Sirrah Locksley, do thou shoot. If thou hittest

such a mark, I will say thou art the first man ever did so."

"I will do my best, as Hubert says," answered Locksley; "no man can do more."

So saying, he again bent his bow, but on the present occasion, looked with attention to his weapon and changed the string. He then took his aim with some deliberation, and the multitude awaited the event in breathless silence. The archer vindicated their opinion of his skill; his arrow split the willow rod against which it was aimed. A jubilee of acclamations followed; and even Prince John, in admiration of Locksley's skill, lost for an instant his dislike to his person. "These twenty nobles," he said, "which with the bugle thou hast fairly won, are thine own; we will make them fifty if thou wilt take livery and service with us as a yeoman of our body-guard, and be near to our person. For never did so strong a hand bend a bow or so true an eye direct a shaft."

"Pardon me noble Prince," said Locksley, "but I have vowed that if ever I take service, it should be with your royal brother, King Richard. These twenty nobles I leave to Hubert, who has this day drawn as brave a bow as his grandsire did at Hastings. Had his modesty not refused the trial, he would have hit the wand as well as I."

Hubert shook his head as he received with reluctance the bounty of the stranger; and Locksley, anxious to escape further observation, mixed with the crowd, and was seen no more.

CHAPTER XIII

Prince John held his high festival in the Castle of Ashby. In the necessity in which he then found himself of courting popularity, he had extended his invitation to a few distinguished Saxon and Danish families, as well as to the Norman nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood.

The Prince received Cedric and Athelstane with distinguished courtesy, and the guests were seated at a table which groaned under a quantity of good cheer.

The long feast had at length its end; and, while the goblet circulated freely, men talked of the feats of the preceding tournament. The topics were treated with military frankness, and the jest and laugh went round the hall. The

brow of Prince John alone was overclouded during these discussions ; some overpowering care seemed agitating his mind, and it was only when he received occasional hints from his attendants that he seemed to take interest in what was passing around him.

" We drink this beaker," said he on one such occasion, " to the health of Wilfred of Ivanhoe, champion of this passage of arms, and grieve that his wound renders him absent from our board. Let all fill to the pledge, and especially Cedric of Rotherwood, the worthy father of a son so promising."

" No, my lord," replied Cedric, standing up, and placing on the table his untasted cup, " I yield not the name of son to the disobedient youth who at once despises my commands and relinquishes the manners and customs of his fathers."

" It is impossible," cried Prince John, with well-feigned astonishment, " that so gallant a knight should be an unworthy or disobedient son ! "

" Yet, my lord," answered Cedric, " so it is with this Wilfred. He left my homely dwelling to mingle with the gay nobility of your brother's court, where he learned to do those tricks of

horsemanship which you prize so highly. He left it contrary to my wish and command."

"I think," said the Prince, after a moment's pause, "that my brother proposed to confer upon his favourite the rich manor of Ivanhoe."

"He did endow him with it," answered Cedric; "nor is it my least quarrel with my son that he stooped to hold, as a feudal vassal, the very domains which his fathers possessed in free and independent right."

"We shall then have your willing sanction, good Cedric," said Prince John, "to confer this fief upon a person whose dignity will not be diminished by holding land of the British crown.—Sir Reginald Front-de-Bœuf," he said, turning towards that baron, "I trust you will so keep the goodly barony of Ivanhoe that Sir Wilfred shall not incur his father's displeasure by again entering upon that fief."

"By St. Anthony," answered the black-browed giant, "I will consent that your Highness shall hold me a Saxon, if either Cedric or Wilfred, or the best that ever bore English blood, shall wrench from me the gift with which your Highness has graced me."

"Whoever shall call thee Saxon, Sir Baron," replied Cedric, offended at a mode of expression by which the Normans frequently expressed their

habitual contempt of the English, " will do thee an honour as great as it is undeserved."

" Assuredly," said Prince John, " my lords, the noble Cedric speaks truth ; and his race may claim precedence over us as much in the length of their pedigrees as in the longitude of their cloaks."

While, with smooth and smiling cheek, the courtiers, each in turn, followed their Prince's example, and aimed a shaft of ridicule at Cedric, the face of the Saxon became inflamed with passion, and he glanced his eyes fiercely from one to another.

" A truce with your raillery, Sir Knights," said Fitzurse ;—" and it were well," he added, addressing the Prince, " that your Highness should assure the worthy Cedric there is no insult intended him by jests which must sound but harshly in the ear of a stranger."

" Insult ! " answered Prince John, resuming his courtesy of demeanour ; " I trust it will not be thought that I could mean or permit any to be offered in my presence. Here ! I fill my cup to Cedric himself, since he refuses to pledge his son's health."

The cup went round amid the well-dissembled applause of the courtiers, which, however, failed to make the impression on the mind of the

Saxon that had been designed. He was silent when the royal pledge again passed round, "To Sir Athelstane of Coningsburgh."

That knight made his obeisance, and showed his sense of the honour by draining a huge goblet in answer to it.

"And now, sirs," said Prince John, who began to be warmed with the wine which he had drunk, "having done justice to our Saxon guests, we will pray of them some requital to our courtesy. Worthy thane," he continued, addressing Cedric, "may we pray you to name to us some Norman whose mention may least sully your mouth, and to wash down with a goblet of wine all bitterness which the sound may leave behind it?"

The Saxon, rising up, and filling his cup to the brim, addressed the Prince in these words: "Your Highness has required that I should name a Norman deserving to be remembered at our banquet. This, perchance, is a hard task, since it calls on the slave to sing the praises of the master. Yet I *will* name a Norman—the first in arms and in place—the best and noblest of his race. I quaff this goblet to the health of Richard the Lion-hearted!"

Prince John, who had expected that his own name would have closed the Saxon's speech,

started when that of his injured brother was so unexpectedly introduced. He raised mechanically the wine cup to his lips, then instantly set it down, to view the demeanour of the company at this unexpected proposal. Some of them, ancient and experienced courtiers, closely imitated the example of the Prince himself, raising the goblet to their lips, and again replacing it before them. There were many who, with a more generous feeling, exclaimed, "Long live King Richard and may he be speedily restored to us!" And some few, among whom were Front-de-Bœuf and the Templar, in sullen disdain suffered their goblets to stand untasted before them. But no man ventured directly to gainsay a pledge filled to the health of the reigning monarch.

Having enjoyed his triumph for about a minute, Cedric said to his companion, "Up, noble Athelstane! we have remained here long enough. Those who wish to know further of our rude Saxon manners must henceforth seek us in the homes of our fathers."

So saying, he arose and left the banqueting-room, followed by Athelstane, and by several other guests, who, partaking of the Saxon lineage, held themselves insulted by the sarcasms of Prince John and his courtiers.

"This, then, is the result of your advice," said the Prince, turning an angry countenance upon Fitzurse, as the Saxon guests retreated; "that I should be bearded at my own board by a drunken Saxon churl, and that, on the mere sound of my brother's name, men should fall off from me?"

"Have patience, sir," replied his counsellor; "De Bracy and I will instantly go among these shuffling cowards and convince them that they have gone too far to recede."

CHAPTER XIV

No spider ever took more pains to repair the shattered meshes of his web than did Waldemar Fitzurse to reunite and combine the scattered members of Prince John's cabal; and nothing was left undone that could determine the wavering or animate the disheartened.

Most of the nobles of Prince John's faction consented to attend the proposed meeting at York, for the purpose of making general arrangements for placing the crown upon his head.

Worn out and exhausted with his various exertions, Fitzurse returned late at night to the Castle of Ashby, and met De Bracy, who had exchanged his banqueting garments for a short green kirtle, with hose of the same cloth and colour, a leathern cap or head-piece, a short sword, a horn slung over his shoulder, a long-bow in his hand, and a bundle of arrows stuck in his belt.

"What mummery is this, De Bracy?" said Fitzurse, somewhat angrily; "is this a time for Christmas gambols and quaint maskings, when the fate of our master, Prince John, is on the very verge of decision? What on earth dost thou purpose by this absurd disguise at a moment so critical?"

"To get me a wife," answered De Bracy coolly; "in this same equipment I will fall upon that herd of Saxon bullocks who have this night left the castle, and carry off from them the lovely Rowena." Seem I not in this garb as bold a forester as ever blew horn? The blame of the violence shall rest with the outlaws of the Yorkshire forests. I have sure spies on the Saxons' motions. Tonight they sleep in the convent of St. Wittol, or Withold, or whatever they call that churl of a Saxon saint, at Burton-on-Trent. Next day's march brings them within our reach, and, falcon-ways, we swoop on them at once.

Presently after I will appear in mine own shape, play the courteous knight, rescue the unfortunate and afflicted fair one from the hands of the rude ravishers, conduct her to Front-de-Bœuf's castle, or to Normandy, if it should be necessary, and produce her not again to her kindred until she be the bride and dame of Maurice De Bracy."

"A marvellously sage plan," said Fitzurse, "and, as I think, not entirely of thine own device. Come, be frank, De Bracy, who aided thee in the invention? and who is to assist in the execution?"

"Marry, if thou must needs know," said De Bracy, "it was the Templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert that shaped out the enterprise. He is to aid me in the onslaught, and he and his followers will personate the outlaws, from whom my valorous arm is, after changing my garb, to rescue the lady. It will be the work of a few hours, and I shall be at York at the head of my daring and valorous fellows, as ready to support any bold design as thy policy can be to form one.—But I hear my comrades assembling, and the steeds stamping and neighing in the outer court.—Farewell. I go, like a true knight, to win the smiles of beauty."

CHAPTER XV

The reader cannot have forgotten that the Black Knight had left the field abruptly when the victory was achieved ; and when he was called upon to receive the reward of his valour he was nowhere to be found. He was at the time holding his course northward, avoiding all frequented paths, and taking the shortest road through the woodlands. He paused for the night at a small inn lying out of the ordinary route, where he obtained from a wandering minstrel news of the event of the tourney.

Next morning, the knight departed early, with the intention of making a long journey. But his purpose was baffled by the devious paths through which he rode, so that when evening closed upon him, he only found himself on the frontiers of the West Riding of Yorkshire. It became necessary to look out for some place in which he might spend the night, which was now fast approaching.

The sun had now sunk behind the Derbyshire hills on his left, and after having in vain endeavoured to select the most beaten path, he resolved to trust to the sagacity of his horse,

experience having on former occasions made him acquainted with the wonderful talent possessed by these animals for extricating themselves and their riders on such emergencies.

The path which the animal adopted rather turned off from the course pursued by the knight during the day ; but as the horse seemed confident in its choice, the rider abandoned himself to its discretion.

He was justified by the event, for the foot-path soon after appeared a little wider and more worn, and the tinkle of a small bell gave the knight to understand that he was in the vicinity of some chapel or hermitage.

He soon reached an open plot of turf, on the opposite side of which a rock rose abruptly from a gently sloping plain. At the bottom of the rock, and leaning, as it were, against it, was constructed a rude hut. The stem of a young fir-tree lopped of its branches, with a piece of wood tied across near the top, was planted upright by the door, as an emblem of the holy cross. At a little distance on the right hand, a fountain of the purest water trickled out of the rock, and was received in a hollow stone. Beside this fountain were the ruins of a very small chapel, of which the roof had partly fallen in.

The whole peaceful and quiet scene lay glimmering in twilight before the eyes of the traveller, giving him good assurance of lodging for the night. The knight leaped from his horse and assailed the door of the hermitage with the butt of his lance, in order to arouse attention and gain admittance.

It was some time before he obtained any answer, and the reply, when made, was unpropitious.

"Pass on, whosoever thou art," was the answer given by a deep hoarse voice from within the hut, "and disturb not the servant of God and St. Dunstan in his evening devotions."

"But how," replied the knight, "is it possible for me to find my way through such a wood as this, when darkness is coming on? I pray you, reverend father, as you are a Christian, to undo your door and at least point out to me my road."

"The road," replied the hermit, "is easy to hit. The path from the wood leads to a morass, and from thence to a ford, which, as the rains have abated, may now be passable. When thou hast crossed the ford, thou wilt take care of thy footing up the left bank, as it is somewhat precipitous, and the path, which hangs over the river, has lately, as I learn—for I

seldom leave the duties of my chapel—given way in sundry places. Thou wilt then keep straight forward—

"A broken path—a precipice—a ford—and a morass!" said the knight, interrupting him. "Sir Hermit, if you were the holiest that ever wore beard or told bead, you shall scarce prevail on me to hold this road tonight. Either open the door quickly, or, by the rood, I shall beat it down and make entry for myself."

"Friend wayfarer," replied the hermit, "be not importunate; if thou puttest me to use the carnal weapon in mine own defence, it will be e'en the worse for thee."

The knight struck the door so furiously with his foot that posts as well as staples shook with violence.

The anchorite, not caring again to expose his door to a similar shock, now called out aloud, "Patience—patience; spare thy strength, good traveller, and I will presently undo the door, though, it may be, my doing so will be little to thy pleasure."

The door accordingly was opened; and the hermit, a large, strong-built man, in his sack-cloth gown and hood, girt with a rope of rushes, stood before the knight. He had in one hand a

lighted torch, or link, and in the other a baton of crab-tree, so thick and heavy that it might well be termed a club. Two large shaggy dogs stood ready to rush upon the traveller as soon as the door should be opened. But when the torch glanced upon the lofty crest and golden spurs of the knight who stood without, the hermit, changing his tone to a sort of churlish courtesy, invited the knight to enter his hut, and made excuse for his unwillingness to open his lodge after sunset, by alleging the multitude of robbers and outlaws who were abroad.

"The poverty of your cell, good father," said the knight, looking around him, "should be a sufficient defence against any risk of thieves, not to mention the aid of two trusty dogs."

"The good keeper of the forest," said the hermit, "hath allowed me the use of these animals to protect my solitude until the times shall mend."

They sat down by an oaken trivet, and gazed with great gravity at each other, each thinking in his heart that he had seldom seen a stronger or more athletic figure than was placed opposite to him.

"Reverend hermit," said the knight, "were it not to interrupt your devout meditation, I would pray to know three things of your holiness:

first, where I am to put my horse ; secondly, what I can have for supper; thirdly, where I am to take up my couch for the night."

"I will reply to you," said the hermit, "with my finger being against my rule to speak by words where signs can answer the purpose. So saying, he pointed successively to two corners of the hut. "Your stable," said he, "is there ; your bed there; and," reaching down a platter with two handfuls of parched pease upon it from the neighbouring shelf, he added, "your supper is here."

The knight shrugged his shoulders, and leaving the hut, brought in his horse, which he had fastened to a tree, unsaddled it with much attention, and spread upon its weary back his own mantle.

The hermit, muttering something about provender left for the keeper's palfrey, dragged out of a recess a bundle of forage, which he spread before the knight's charger, and immediately afterwards shook down a quantity of dried fern in the corner which he had assigned for the rider's couch. The knight returned him thanks for the courtesy ; and, this duty done, both resumed their seats by the table, whereon stood the trencher of pease placed between them. The hermit, after a long grace, which once had been

Latin, set example to his guest by modestly putting into a very large mouth, furnished with teeth which might have ranked with those of a boar in both sharpness and whiteness, some three or four dried pease, a miserable grist, as it seemed, for so large and able a mill.

The knight, in order to follow so laudable an example, laid aside his helmet, his corslet, and the greater part of his armour, and showed to the hermit a head thick-curled with yellow hair, high features, blue eyes, remarkably bright and sparkling, a mouth well formed, having the upper lip clothed with a moustache darker than his hair, and bearing altogether the look of a bold, daring, and enterprising man.

The hermit threw back his cowl, and showed a round bullet head belonging to a man in the prime of life. His features expressed nothing of monastic austerity or of ascetic privations ; on the contrary, it was a bold bluff countenance, with broad black eyebrows, a well-turned forehead, and cheeks round and vermilion, from which descended a long and curly black beard. Such a visage, joined to the brawny form of the holy man, spoke rather of sirloins and haunches than of pease and pulse. This incongruity did not escape the guest. After he had with great difficulty accomplished the mastication of a

mouthful of the dried pease, he found it absolutely necessary to request his pious entertainer to furnish him with some liquor; who replied to his request by placing before him a large can of the purest water from the fountain.

"It seems to me, reverend father," said the knight, "that the small morsels which you eat, together with this somewhat thin beverage, have thriven with you marvellously."

"Sir Knight," answered the hermit, "it has please Our Lady and my patron saint to bless the pittance to which I restrain myself."

"Holy father," said the knight, "upon whose countenance it hath pleased Heaven to work such a miracle, permit a sinful layman to crave thy name."

"Thou mayest call me," answered the hermit, "the Clerk of Copmanhurst, for so I am termed in these parts. They add, it is true, the epithet holy, but I stand not upon that, as being unworthy of such addition. And now, valiant knight, may I pray ye for the name of my honourable guest?"

"Truly," said the knight, "Holy Clerk of Copmanhurst, men call me in these parts the Black Knight; many, sir, add to it the epithet of Sluggard, whereby I am no way ambitious to be distinguished."

The hermit could scarcely forbear from smiling at his guest's reply.

"I see," said he, "Sir Sluggish Knight, that thou art a man of prudence and of counsel; and, moreover, I see that thou dost not like my poor monastic fare, accustomed, perhaps, as thou hast been to the license of courts and camps, and the luxuries of cities; and now I bethink me, Sir Sluggard, that when the charitable keeper of this forest-walk left these dogs for my protection, and also those bundles of forage, he left me also some food, which, being unfit for my use, the very recollection of it had escaped me amid my more weighty meditations."

The hermit went to the further side of the hut, and out of the recesses of a dark closet, he brought a large pasty which he placed before his guest. The knight, using his poniard to cut it open, lost no time in making himself acquainted with its contents.

"How long is it since the good keeper has been here?" said the knight to his host, after having swallowed several hasty morsels of this reinforcement to the hermit's good cheer.

"About two months," answered the father hastily.

"By the true Lord," said the knight, "everything in your hermitage is miraculous, Holy

Clerk ! for I would have been sworn that the fat buck which furnished this venison had been running on foot within the week."

The hermit was somewhat discountenanced by this observation; and, moreover, he made but a poor figure while gazing on the diminution of the pasty, on which his guest was making desperate inroads—a warfare in which his previous profession of abstinence left him no pretext for joining.

"I have been in Palestine, Sir Clerk," said the knight, stopping short of a sudden, "and I bethink me it is a custom there that every host who entertains a guest shall assure him of the wholesomeness of his food by partaking of it along with him. I shall be highly bound to you, if you comply with this Eastern custom."

"To ease your unnecessary scruples, Sir Knight, I will for once depart from my rule," replied the hermit.

The ice of ceremony being once broken, it seemed matter of rivalry between the guest and the entertainer which should display the best appetite; and although the former had fasted longest, yet the hermit fairly surpassed him.

"Holy Clerk," said the knight, when his hunger was appeased, "I would gage my good

horse yonder against a zecchin, that the same honest keeper to whom we are obliged for the venison has left thee a stoup of wine, or a runlet of canary, or some such trifle, by way of ally to this noble pasty."

The hermit replied by a grin ; and returning to the hutch, he produced a leathern bottle, which might contain about four quarts. He also brought forth two large drinking cups. "Fill thy cup," he said, "and welcome ; and do not, I pray thee, by further impertinent inquiries, put me to show that thou couldst hardly have made good thy lodging had I been earnest to oppose thee."

"By my faith," said the knight, "thou makest me more curious than ever ! Thou art the most mysterious hermit I ever met ; and I will know more of thee ere we part. As for the threats, know, holy man, thou speakest to one whose trade it is to find danger wherever it is to be met with."

"I hope, Sir Knight, said the hermit, thou hast given no good reason for thy surname of the Sluggard. I do promise thee, I suspect thee grievously. Nevertheless, thou art my guest, and I will not put thy manhood to the proof without thine own free will. Sit thee down, then, let us drink, sing, and be merry."

Fast and furious grew the mirth of the parties, and many a song was exchanged betwixt them, when their revels were interrupted by a loud knocking at the door of the hermitage.

The occasion of this interruption we can only explain by resuming the adventures of another set of our characters.

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CHAPTER XVI

When Cedric the Saxon saw his son drop down senseless in the lists at Ashby, his first impulse was to order him into the custody and care of his own attendants : but the words choked in his throat. He could not bring himself to acknowledge, in presence of such an assembly, the son whom he had renounced and disinherited. He ordered Oswald, however, to keep an eye upon him; and directed that officer to convey Ivanhoe to Ashby as soon as the crowd had dispersed.

But it was in vain that Cedric's cupbearer looked around for his young master : he saw the bloody spot on which he had lately sunk down, but

himself he saw no longer. He suddenly cast his eye upon a person attired like a squire, in whom he recognised the features of his fellow-servant Gurth. He deemed it his duty to secure Gurth, as a fugitive of whose fate his master was to judge.

Renewing his inquiry concerning the fate of Ivanhoe, the only information which his cup-bearer could collect from the bystanders was that the knight had been raised with care by certain well-attired grooms, and placed in a litter belonging to a lady among the spectators, which had immediately transported him out of the press. Oswald, on receiving the intelligence, resolved to return to his master for further instructions, carrying along with him Gurth, whom he considered in some sort as a deserter from the service of Cedric.

Cedric had been under very intense and agonising apprehensions concerning his son, for nature had asserted her rights. But no sooner was he informed that Ivanhoe was in careful, and probably in friendly, hands than his paternal anxiety gave way anew to the feeling of injured pride and resentment at what he termed Wilfred's filial disobedience. "Let him wander his way," said he, "let those leech his wounds for whose sake he encountered them. He is fitter to do the juggling tricks of the Norman chivalry than to

maintain the fame and honour of his English ancestry."

"If to maintain the honour of ancestry," said Rowena, who was present, "it is sufficient to be wise in council and brave in execution, to be boldest among the bold and gentlest among the gentle, I know no voice, save his father's—"

"Be silent, Lady Rowena! on this subject only I hear you not. Prepare yourself for the Prince's festival. We have been summoned thither with unwonted circumstances of honour and of courtesy. Thither will I go, were it only to show those proud Normans how little the fate of a son, who could defeat their bravest, can affect a Saxon."

"Thither," said Rowena, "do I NOT go; and I pray you to beware, lest what you mean for courage and constancy shall be accounted hardness of heart."

"Remain at home, then, ungrateful lady," answered Cedric; "thine is the hard heart, which can sacrifice the weal of an oppressed people to an idle and unauthorised attachment. I seek the noble Athelstane, and with him attend the banquet of John of Anjou."

He went accordingly to the banquet, of which we have already mentioned the principal events. Immediately upon retiring from the castle,

the Saxon thanes, with their attendants, took horse ; and it was during the bustle which attended their doing so, that Cedric for the first time cast his eyes upon the deserter Gurth. The noble Saxon had returned from the banquet, as we have seen, in no very placid humour, and wanted but a pretext for wreaking his anger upon some one. "The gyves !" he said, "the gyves ! Oswald—Hundibert ! Dogs and villains ! why leave ye the knave unfettered ?"

Without daring to remonstrate, the companions of Gurth bound him with a halter, as the readiest cord which occurred. He submitted to the operation without remonstrance, except that, darting a reproachful look at his master, he said, "This comes of loving your flesh and blood better than mine own."

The travellers rode fast and reached the Convent of St. Withold's, where they rested for the night. Next morning, as the cavalcade left the court of the monastery, an incident happened somewhat alarming to the Saxons. A large, lean, black dog, sitting upright, howled most piteously as the foremost riders left the gate, and presently afterwards, barking wildly, and jumping to and fro, seemed bent upon attaching itself to the party.

"I like not that music, father Cedric," said Athelstane ; "in my mind, we had better turn

back. It is unlucky to travel when your path is crossed by a monk, a hare or a howling dog, until you have eaten your next meal."

"Away!" said Cedric, impatiently; "the day is already too short for the journey. For the dog, I know it to be the cur of the runaway slave Gurth." So saying, and rising at the same time in his stirrups, he launched his javelin at poor Fangs—for Fangs it was, who, having traced his master thus far upon his stolen expedition, had here lost him, and was now, in his uncouth way, rejoicing at his reappearance. The javelin inflicted a wound upon the animal's shoulder; and Fangs fled howling from the presence of the enraged thane.

Gurth's heart swelled within him. Having in vain attempted to raise his hand to his eyes, he said to Wamba, "I pray thee, do me the kindness to wipe my eyes with the skirt of thy mantle; the dust offends me, and these bands will not let me help myself one way and another. —And tell Cedric that Gurth the son of Beowulph renounces his service. Yesterday he left Wilfred, my young master, in his blood. Today he has striven to kill before my face the only other living creature that ever showed me kindness." Wamba did him the service he required, and they rode side by side for a long time, during

which Gurth maintained a moody silence, which no efforts of the Jester could induce him to break.

Meanwhile Cedric and Athelstane conversed together on the state of the land, on the dissensions of the royal family, on the feuds and quarrels among the Norman nobles, and on the chance which there was that the oppressed Saxons might be able to free themselves from the yoke of the Normans, or at least to elevate themselves into national consequence and independence, during the civil convulsions which were likely to ensue. On this subject Cedric was all animation. The restoration of the independence of his race was the idol of his heart, to which he had willingly sacrificed domestic happiness and the interests of his son. But, in order to achieve this great revolution in favour of the native English, it was necessary that they should be united among themselves, and act under an acknowledged head. Whatever pretensions Athelstane had to be considered as head of the Saxon confederacy, many of the nation were disposed to prefer to his the title of the Lady Rowena, who drew her descent from Alfred, and whose father had been a chief renowned for wisdom, courage and generosity. It was a leading part of Cedric's plan to extinguish faction by promoting a marriage betwixt Rowena and Athelstane.

An obstacle occurred to this his favourite project in the mutual attachment of his ward and his son; and hence the original cause of the banishment of Wilfred from the house of his father.

This stern measure Cedric had adopted in hopes that, during Wilfred's absence, Rowena might relinquish her preference ; but in this hope he was disappointed. Rowena was, by her previous education, disposed both to resist and to resent any attempt to control her affections, or dispose of her hand contrary to her inclinations. The opinions which she felt strongly she avowed boldly ; and Cedric, who could not free himself from his habitual deference to her opinions, felt totally at a loss how to enforce his authority of guardian.

It was in vain that he attempted to dazzle her with the prospect of a visionary throne. Rowena, who possessed strong sense, neither considered his plan as practicable nor as desirable, so far as she was concerned, could it have been achieved. Without attempting to conceal her avowed preference of Wilfred of Ivanhoe, she declared that, were that favoured knight out of question, she would rather take refuge in a convent than share a throne with Athelstane.

Nevertheless, Cedric persisted in using every means in his power to bring about the proposed match, in which he conceived he was rendering an important service to the Saxon cause. The sudden and romantic appearance of his son in the lists at Ashby he had justly regarded as almost a death's blow to his hopes. He was now bent upon making a determined effort for the union of Athelstane and Rowena, together with expediting those other measures which seemed necessary to forward the restoration of Saxon independence.

CHAPTER XVII

The travellers had now reached the verge of the wooded country, and were about to plunge into its recesses, held dangerous at that time from the number of outlaws, who occupied the forests in large bands.

Suddenly they were alarmed by repeated cries for assistance; and when they rode up to the place from whence they came, they

were surprised to find a horse-litter placed upon the ground, beside which sat a young woman, richly dressed in the Jewish fashion, while an old man, whose yellow cap proclaimed him to belong to the same nation, walked up and down with gestures of the deepest despair, and wrung his hands as if affected by some strange disaster.

To the inquiries of Athelstane and Cedric, the old Jew could for some time only answer by invoking the protection of all the patriarchs of the Old Testament. When he began to come to himself out of this agony of terror, Isaac of York (for it was our old friend) was at length able to explain that he had hired a body-guard of six men at Ashby, together with mules for carrying the litter of a sick friend. They had come thus far in safety ; but, having received information from a wood-cutter that there was a strong band of outlaws lying in wait in the woods before them, Isaac's mercenaries had not only taken flight, but had carried off with them the horses which bore the litter. Would it but please your valours," said Isaac, in a tone of deep humiliation, " to permit the poor Jews to travel under your safeguard, I swear that never has favour been conferred which shall be more gratefully acknowledged.

"Dog of a Jew!" said Athelstane; "fight or flee, ask neither aid nor company from us."

Cedric did not assent to the severe proposal of his companion. "We shall do better," said he, "to leave them two of our attendants and two horses to convey them back to the next village."

Rowena, somewhat alarmed by the mention of outlaws, in force, and so near them, strongly seconded the proposal of her guardian. But Rebecca, suddenly quitting her dejected posture, and making her way through the attendants to the palfrey of the Saxon lady, knelt down, and kissed the hem of her garment. Then rising and throwing back her veil, she implored her in the great name of the God whom they both worshipped, that she would have compassion upon them, and suffer them to go forward under their safeguard. "It is not for myself that I pray this favour," said Rebecca, "nor is it even for that poor old man. But it is in the name of one dear to many, and dear even to you, that I beseech you to let this sick person be transported with care and tenderness under your protection. For if evil chance him, the last moment of your life would be embittered with regret for denying that which I ask of you."

The noble and solemn air with which Rebecca made this appeal, gave it double weight with the fair Saxon.

"The man is old and feeble," said Rowena to her guardian, "the maiden young and beautiful, their friend sick and in peril of his life; Jews though they be, we cannot as Christians leave them in this extremity. Let them unload two of the sumpter mules and put the baggage behind two of the serfs. The mules may transport the litter, and we have led horses for the old man and his daughter."

Cedric readily assented to what she proposed, and Rowena requested Rebecca to ride by her side.

The change of baggage was hastily achieved; for the single word 'outlaws' rendered every one sufficiently alert, and the approach of twilight made the sound yet more impressive. Amid the bustle, Gurth was taken from horseback, in the course of which removal he prevailed upon the Jester to slack the cord with which his arms were bound. It was so negligently refastened, perhaps intentionally, on the part of Wamba, that Gurth found no difficulty in freeing his arms altogether from bondage, and then, gliding into the thicket, he made his escape from the party.

The path now began to descend into a dingle, traversed by a brook whose banks were broken, swampy, and overgrown with dwarf willows. Cedric and Athelstane, who were at the head of the retinue, had just crossed the brook with a part of their followers, when they were assailed in front, flank, and rear at once, with an impetuosity to which, in their confused and ill-prepared condition, it was impossible to offer effectual resistance.

Both the Saxon chiefs were made prisoners at the same moment. Of all the train none escaped except Wamba, who made a brave though ineffectual attempt to succour his master. Finding himself overpowered, he at length threw himself from his horse, plunged into the thicket, and escaped from the scene of action.

Yet the valiant Jester, as soon as he found himself safe, hesitated more than once whether he should not turn back and share the captivity of a master to whom he was sincerely attached.

Suddenly a voice very near him called out in a low and cautious tone, "Wamba!" and at the same time a dog, which he recognised to be Fangs, jumped up and fawned upon him. "Gurth!" answered Wamba with the same caution, and the swineherd immediately stood before him.

"What is the matter?" said he, eagerly; "what mean these cries and that clashing of swords?"

"Only a trick of the times," said Wamba; "they are all prisoners."

"Who are prisoners?" exclaimed Gurth impatiently.

"My lord and my lady, and Athelstane, and Hundibert, and Oswald. The others lie tumbled about on the green, like the crab-apples that you shake down to your swine. And I would laugh at it," said the honest Jester, "if I could for weeping." And he shed tears of unfeigned sorrow.

Gurth's countenance kindled. "Wamba," he said, "thou hast a weapon, and thy heart was ever stronger than thy brain; we are only two, but a sudden attack from men of resolution will do much; follow me!"

"Whither?—and for what purpose?" said the Jester.

"To rescue Cedric."

"But you have renounced his service but now," said Wamba.

"That," said Gurth, "was but while he was fortunate—follow me!"

As the Jester was about to obey, a third person suddenly made his appearance and commanded

them both to halt. From his dress and arms, Wamba would have conjectured him to be one of those outlaws who had just assailed his master ; the glittering baldric across his shoulder, with the rich bugle-horn which it supported, as well as the calm and commanding expression of his voice and manner, made him, notwithstanding the twilight, recognise Locksley, the yeoman who had been victorious in the contest for the prize of archery.

" What is the meaning of all this," he said, " or who is it that rifle, and ransom, and make prisoners in these forests ? "

" You may look at their cassocks close by," said Wamba, " and see whether they be thy children's coats or no."

"I will learn that presently," answered Locksley, " and I charge ye, on peril of your lives, not to stir from the place where ye stand, until I have returned. Obey me, and it shall be the better for you and your masters."

So saying, he unbuckled his baldric with the bugle, took a feather from his cap, and gave them to Wamba. He then went to execute his purposes of reconnoitring.

He returned in the course of a few minutes, and said, " I have mingled among yon men, and have learnt to whom they belong, and

whither they are bound. There is, I think, no chance that they will proceed to any actual violence against their prisoners. For three men to attempt them at this moment were little else than madness ; for they are good men of war, and have, as such, placed sentinels to give the alarm when any one approaches. But I trust soon to gather such a force as may act in defiance of all their precautions. You are both servants, and, as I think, faithful servants, of Cedric the Saxon, the friend of the rights of Englishmen. He shall not want English hands to help him in this extremity. Come, then, with me, until I gather more aid."

So saying, he walked through the wood at a great pace, followed by the Jester and the swineherd.

CHAPTER XVIII

It was after three hours' good walking that the servants of Cedric, with their guide, arrived at a small opening in the forest, in the centre of which grew an oak-tree of enormous magnitude.

Beneath this tree, four or five yeomen lay stretched on the ground, while another, as sentinel, walked to and fro in the moonlight shade.

Upon hearing the sound of feet approaching, the watch instantly gave the alarm, and the sleepers as suddenly started up and bent their bows. But when Locksley was recognised, he was welcomed with every token of respect and attachment.

"Where is the Miller?" was his first question.

"On the road towards Rotherham."

"With how many?" demanded the leader, for such he seemed to be.

"With six men, and good hope of booty, if it please St. Nicholas."

"Devoutly spoken," said Locksley; "and where is Allan-a-Dale?"

"Walked up towards the Watling Street to watch for the Prior of Jorvaulx."

"That is well thought on also," replied the Captain, "and where is the Friar?"

"In his cell."

"Thither will I go," said Locksley. "Disperse and seek your companions. Collect what force you can, for there's game afoot that must be hunted hard, and will turn to bay. Meet me here by daybreak. And two of you," he

added, "take the road quickly towards Torquilstone, the castle of Front-de-Bœuf. A set of gallants, who have been masquerading in such guise as our own, are carrying a band of prisoners thither. Keep a close watch on them, and despatch one of your comrades, the lightest of foot, to bring the news of the yeomen thereabout."

They promised implicit obedience, and departed with alacrity on their different errands. In the meanwhile, their leader and his two companions pursued their way to the chapel of Copmanhurst.

The anchorite and his guest were performing, at the full extent of their very powerful lungs, an old drinking song, when Locksley's loud and repeated knocks disturbed them. "By my beads," said the hermit, stopping short in a grand flourish, "here come more benighted guests. I would not for my cowl that they found us in this goodly exercise. Get thine iron pot on thy head then, friend Sluggard, as quickly as thy nature will permit, while I remove these pewter flagons."

"Mad priest," said a voice from without, "open to Locksley!"

"All's safe—all's right," said the hermit to his companion, and he speedily unbolted the

portal, and admitted Locksley, with his two companions.

"Why, hermit," was the yeoman's first question as soon as he beheld the knight, "what boon companion hast thou here?—Art thou mad," he added, taking the Friar a step aside, "to give admittance to a knight thou dost not know? Hast thou forgot our articles?"

"Not know him?" replied the Friar, boldly, "I know him as well as the beggar knows his dish."

"And what is his name, then?" demanded Locksley.

"His name," said the hermit,—"his name is Sir Anthony of Scrabelstone—as if I would drink with a man, and not know his name!"

"Thou hast been drinking more than enough, Friar," said the woodsman, "and I fear, prating more than enough too."

"Good yeoman," said the knight, coming forward, "be not wroth with my merry host. He did but afford me the hospitality which I would have compelled from him if he had refused it."

"Thou compel!" said the Friar; "wait but till I have changed this grey gown for a green cassock, and if I make not a quarter staff ring upon thy pate, I am neither true clerk nor good woodsman."

While he spoke thus, he stripped off his gown, and appeared in a close black buckram doublet and drawers, over which he speedily put on a cassock of green and hose of the same colour.

Locksley led the knight a little apart and addressed him thus: "Deny it not, Sir Knight, you are he who decided the victory to the advantage of the English against the strangers on the second day of the tournament at Ashby."

"And what follows if you guess truly, good yeoman? replied the knight.

"I should in that case hold you," replied the yeoman, "a friend to the weaker party."

"Such is the duty of a true knight at least," replied the Black Champion; "and I would not willingly that there were reason to think otherwise of me."

"But for my purpose," said the yeoman, "thou shouldst be as well a good Englishman as a good knight.—Hear me, and I will tell thee of an enterprise in which, if thou be'st really that which thou seemest, thou mayest take an honourable part. A band of villains, in the disguise of better men than themselves, have made themselves masters of the person of a noble Englishman called Cedric the Saxon, together with his ward, and his friend Athelstane

of Coningsburgh, and have transported them to a castle in this forest, called Torquilstone. I ask of thee, as a good knight and a good Englishman, wilt thou aid in their rescue ?"

"I am bound by my vow to do so," replied the knight, "but I would willingly know who you are, who request my assistance in their behalf."

"I am," said the forester, "a nameless man; but I am the friend of my country, and of my country's friends. With this account of me you must for the present remain satisfied, the more especially since you yourself desire to continue unknown. Believe, however, that my word, when pledged, is as inviolate as if I wore golden spurs."

"I willingly believe it," said the knight; "I have been accustomed to study men's countenances, and I can read in thine honesty and resolution. I will, therefore, ask thee no further questions, but aid thee in setting at freedom these oppressed captives."

The Friar, now completely accoutred as a yeoman, with sword and buckler, bow and quiver, twirled his heavy partisan round his head with three fingers, as if he had been balancing a reed, and exclaimed: "Where be those false ravishers, who carry off wenches against their

will ? May the foul fiend fly off with me, if I am not man enough for a dozen of them."

"Come on, my masters," said Locksley, "we must collect all our forces, and few enough we shall have, if we are to storm the castle of Reginald Front-de-Bœuf."

"What! is it Front-de-Bœuf," said the Black Knight, "who has stopped on the king's highway the king's liege subjects ? Is he turned thief and oppressor ?"

"Oppressor he ever was, said Locksley.

"And for thief," said the Friar, "I doubt if ever he were even half so honest a man as many a thief of my acquaintance."

CHAPTER XIX

The armed men by whom Cedric and his companions had been seized, hurried their captives along towards the place of security, where they intended to imprison them. But darkness came on fast, and the paths of the wood seemed but imperfectly known to the marauders. The summer morn had dawned upon them ere they could travel in full assurance that they held the right path. The cavalcade now moved rapidly forward.

Cedric was endeavouring to wring out of those who guarded him an avowal of their character and purpose. "You should be Englishmen," said he; "and yet, sacred Heaven! you prey upon your countrymen as if you were very Normans. What would you have of me? or in what can this violence serve ye? Ye are worse than brute beasts in your actions, and will you imitate them in their very dumbness?"

It was in vain that Cedric expostulated with his guards, who had too many good reasons for their silence to be induced to break it either by his wrath or expostulations. They continued to hurry him along, travelling at a very rapid rate, until, at the end of an avenue of

huge trees, arose Torquilstone, now the hoary and ancient castle of Reginald Front-de-Bœuf. It was a fortress of no great size, consisting of a donjon, or large and high square tower, surrounded by buildings of inferior height. Around the exterior wall was a deep moat, supplied with water from a neighbouring rivulet. The access, as usual in castles of the period, lay through an arched barbican, or outwork, which was terminated and defended by a small turret at each corner.

Cedric no sooner saw the turrets of Front-de-Bœuf's castle than he instantly augured more truly concerning the cause of his misfortune.

They now stood before the gate of the castle. De Bracy winded his horn three times, and the archers and cross-bow men, who had manned the wall upon seeing their approach, hastened to lower the drawbridge and admit them.

The prisoners were compelled by their guards to alight. The Lady Rowena was next separated from her train, and conducted to a distant apartment. The same alarming distinction was conferred on Rebecca, in spite of her father's entreaties, who offered even money, in this extremity of distress, that she might be permitted to abide with him.

The old Jew was forcibly dragged off in a different direction from the other prisoners. The domestics, after being carefully searched and disarmed, were confined in another part of the castle ; and Rowena was refused even the comfort she might have derived from the attendance of her handmaiden Elgitha.

The apartment in which Cedric and Athelstane were confined had formerly been the great hall of the castle. It was now abandoned to meaner purposes, and was used as a sort of guard-room.

Cedric paced the apartment, filled with indignant reflections on the past and on the present, when the door opened and gave entrance to a sewer, holding his white rod of office. This important person advanced into the chamber with a grave pace, followed by four attendants, bearing in a table covered with dishes, the sight and smell of which seemed to be an instant compensation to Athelstane for all the inconvenience he had undergone. The persons who attended on the feast were masked and cloaked.

" What mummery is this ? " said Cedric ; " think you that we are ignorant whose prisoners we are ? Tell your master, Reginald Front-de-Bœuf, that we know no reason he can have for withholding our liberty, excepting his unlawful desire to enrich himself at our expense.

Let him name the ransom at which he rates our liberty, and it shall be paid, provided the exaction is suited to our means."

The sewer made no answer, but bowed his head.

The captives had not long enjoyed their refreshment, however, ere their attention was disturbed by the blast of a horn winded before the gate. It was repeated three times with much violence. The Saxons started from the table and hastened to the window. But their curiosity was disappointed ; for these outlets only looked upon the court of the castle, and the sound came from beyond its precincts. The summons, however, seemed of importance, for a considerable degree of bustle instantly took place in the castle.

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CHAPTER XX

The poor Jew had been hastily thrown into a dungeon-vault of the castle, the floor of which was deep beneath the level of the ground, and very damp. The only light was received through one or two loopholes far above the reach of the captive's hand. Chains and shackles, which had been the portion of former captives, hung rusted on the walls, and in the rings of one of those sets of fetters there remained two mouldering bones, which seemed to have been once those of the human leg. At one end of this ghastly apartment was a large fire-grate, over the top of which were stretched some transverse iron-bars, half devoured with rust.

Isaac sat in a corner of this dungeon without altering his position for nearly three hours, at the expiry of which steps were heard on the dungeon stair. The bolts screamed as they were withdrawn, and Reginald Front-de-Bœuf, followed by the two saracen slaves of the Templar, entered the prison.

Each of these slaves had in his hand a small pannier ; and, when they entered the dungeon, they stopped at the door until Front-de-Bœuf himself carefully locked and double-locked it. Having taken this precaution, he advanced

slowly up the apartment towards the Jew, upon whom he kept his eye fixed as if he wished to paralyse him with his glance, as some animals are said to fascinate their prey. The Jew sat with his mouth agape, and his eyes fixed on the savage baron with such earnestness of terror that his frame seemed literally to shrink together.

The Norman paused within three steps of the corner in which the unfortunate Jew had now coiled himself up, and made a sign for one of the slaves to approach.

The man came forward accordingly, and, producing from his basket a large pair of scales and several weights, he laid them at the feet of Front-de-Bœuf.

"Most accursed dog," said the Baron, addressing his unfortunate captive, "seest thou these scales?"

The unhappy Jew returned a feeble affirmative.

"In these very scales shalt thou weigh me out", said the relentless Baron, "a thousand silver pounds, after the just measure and weight of the Tower of London. And if silver be scant, I refuse not gold."

"Have mercy on me, noble knight," exclaimed Isaac, "I am old; and poor, and helpless. It were unworthy to triumph over me. It is a poor deed to crush a worm."

"Old thou mayest be," replied the knight; "more shame to their folly who have suffered thee to grow grey in usury and knavery. Feeble thou mayest be, for when had a Jew either heart or hand? But rich it is well known thou art—My purpose is deep and peremptory. This dungeon is no place for trifling."

He again made a signal for the slaves to approach, and spoke to them apart. The Saracens produced from their baskets a quantity of charcoal, a pair of bellows, and a flask of oil. While one struck a light with a flint and steel, the other disposed the charcoal in the large rusty grate which we have already mentioned, and exercised the bellows until the fuel came to a red glow.

"Seest thou, Isaac," said Front-de-Bœuf, "the range of iron bars above that glowing charcoal? On that warm couch thou shalt lie, stripped of thy clothes as if thou wert to rest on a bed of down. One of these slaves shall maintain the fire beneath thee, while the other shall anoint thy wretched limbs with oil, lest the roast should burn—Now choose betwixt such a scorching bed and the payment of a thousand pounds of silver; for, by the head of my father, thou hast no other option."

The Jew looked at the glowing furnace, and seeing no chance of his tormentor relenting, his resolution gave way.

"I will pay," he said, "the thousand pounds of silver—That is," he added, after a moment's pause, "I will pay it with the help of my brethren—When and where must it be delivered?"

"Here," replied Front-de-Bœuf, "here it must be delivered, weighed and told down on this very dungeon floor. Thinkest thou I will part with thee until thy ransom is secure?"

The Jew groaned deeply. "Grant me," he said, "at least, with my own liberty, that of the companions with whom I travel. They scorned me as a Jew, yet they pitied my desolation, and because they tarried to aid me by the way, a share of my evil hath come upon them."

"If thou meanest yonder Saxon churls," said Front-de-Bœuf, "their ransom will depend upon other terms than thine. Mind thine own concern, Jew, I warn thee, and meddle not with those of others."

"I am, then," he said, "only to be set at liberty, together with mine wounded friend?"

"Shall I twice recommend it," said Front-de-Bœuf, "to a son of Israel, to meddle with

his own concerns, and leave those of others alone? Since thou hast made thy choice, it remains but that thou payest down thy ransom, and that at a short day—When shall I have the shekels, Isaac?"

"Let my daughter Rebecca go forth to York," answered Isaac, "with your safe-conduct, noble knight, and so soon as man and horse can return, the treasure"—here he groaned deeply, but added, after the pause of a few seconds,—"the treasure shall be told down on this very floor."

"Thy daughter!" said Front-de-Bœuf, as if surprised, "by heavens, Isaac, I would I had known of this. I gave her to be a handmaiden to Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert."

The yell which Isaac raised at this unfeeling communication, made the very vault ring, and astounded the two Saracens so much that they let go their hold of the Jew. He availed himself of his enlargement to throw himself on the pavement and clasp the knees of Front-de-Bœuf.

"Take all that you have asked," said he, "Sir Knight, take ten times more—reduce me to ruin and to beggary, if thou wilt,—nay, pierce me with thy poniard, broil me on that furnace; but spare my daughter. As thou art

born of woman, spare the honour of a helpless maiden. She is the image of my deceased Rachel—she is the last of six pledges of her love."

"I would," said the Norman, somewhat relenting, "that I had known of this before. I thought your race had loved nothing save their money-bags. But it aids us not now. My word is passed to my comrade in arms, nor would I break it for ten Jews and Jewesses to boot—Take thought now to pay me the ransom thou hast promised, or woe betide thy Jewish throat!"

"Robber and villain!" said the Jew, retorting the insults of his oppressor with passion, which, however impotent, he now found it impossible to bridle, "I will pay thee nothing—not one silver penny will I pay thee unless my daughter is delivered to me in safety and honour!"

"Art thou in thy senses, Israelite?" said the Norman, sternly, "has thy flesh and blood a charm against heated iron and scalding oil?"

"I care not!" said the Jew, rendered desperate by paternal affection; "do thy worst. My daughter is my flesh and blood, dearer to me a thousand times than those limbs which thy cruelty threatens. No silver will I give thee, unless I were to pour it molten down thy

avaricious throat; no, not a silver penny will I give thee, Nazarene, were it to save thee from the deep damnation thy whole life has merited! Take my life if thou wilt, and say the Jew, amidst his tortures, knew how to disappoint the Christian."

"We shall see that," said Front-de-Bœuf; "strip him, slaves, and chain him down upon the bars."

In spite of the feeble struggles of the old man, the Saracens had already torn from him his upper garment, and were proceeding totally to disrobe him, when the sound of a bugle, winded without the castle, penetrated even to the recesses of the dungeon, and immediately after loud voices were heard calling for Sir Reginald Front-de-Bœuf. Unwilling to be found engaged in his hellish occupation, the savage baron gave the slaves a signal to restore Isaac's garment, and quitted the dungeon with his attendants.

CHAPTER XXI

The actors in this nefarious drama had arranged the several parts which each of them was to perform. This had been settled in a council held by Front-de-Bœuf, De Bracy, and the Templar, after a long and warm debate concerning the several advantages which each insisted upon deriving from his peculiar share in this audacious enterprise.

It was about the hour of noon when De Bracy, for whose advantage the expedition had been first planned, appeared before Rowena.

He saluted her by doffing his velvet bonnet which was garnished with a golden brooch. Then he gently motioned her to a seat; and as she still retained her standing posture, the knight ungloved his right hand, and motioned to conduct her thither. But Rowena declined, by her gesture, the proffered compliment, and replied, "If I be in the presence of my jailor, Sir Knight, it best becomes his prisoner to remain standing till she learns her doom."

"Alas! fair Rowena," returned De Bracy, "you are in presence of your captive, not your jailor; and it is from your fair eyes that De

Bracy must receive that doom which you fondly expect from him.",

" I know you not, sir," said the lady, drawing herself up with all the pride of offended rank and beauty; " I know you not;—and the insolent familiarity with which you apply to me the jargon of a troubadour, forms no apology for the violence of a robber."

" That I am unknown to you," said De Bracy, " is indeed my misfortune; yet let me hope that De Bracy's name has not been always unspoken when minstrels or heralds have praised deeds of chivalry."

" To heralds and to minstrels, then, leave thy praise, Sir Knight," replied Rowena, " and tell me which of them shall record in song, the memorable conquest of this night, a conquest obtained over an old man followed by a few timid hinds; and its booty, an unfortunate maiden, transported against her will to the castle of a robber!"

" You are unjust, Lady Rowena," said the knight, biting his lips in some confusion; " yourself free from passion, you can allow no excuse for the frenzy of another, although caused by your own beauty."

" I pray you, Sir Knight," said Rowena, " to cease a language so commonly used by strolling

minstrels that it becomes not the mouth of knights or nobles."

"You counsel me well, lady," said the Norman; "and in the bold language which best justifies bold action, I tell thee, thou shalt never leave this castle or thou shalt leave it as Maurice de Bracy's wife. Thou art proud, Rowena, and thou art the fitter to be my wife. How else wouldst thou escape from the mean precincts of a country grange, where Saxons herd with the swine which form their wealth?"

"Sir Knight," replied Rowena, "the grange which you contemn hath been my shelter from infancy; and, trust me, when I leave it—should that day ever arrive—it shall be with one who has not learnt to despise the dwelling and manners in which I have been brought up."

"I guess your meaning, lady," said De Bracy; "but dream not that Richard Cœur-de-Lion will ever resume his throne, far less that Wilfred of Ivanhoe, his minion, will ever lead thee to his footstool, to be there welcomed as the bride of a favourite. Know, lady, that this rival is in my power, and that it rests but with me to betray the secret of his being within the castle to Front-de-Bœuf, whose jealousy will be more fatal than mine."

"Wilfred here!" said Rowena, in disdain; "that is as true as that Front-de-Bœuf is his rival."

De Bracy looked at her steadily for an instant. "Wert thou really ignorant of this?" said he; "didst thou not know that Wilfred of Ivanhoe travelled in the litter of the Jew?"

"And if he is here," said Rowena, compelling herself to a tone of indifference, though trembling with an agony of apprehension which she could not suppress, "in what is he the rival of Front-de-Bœuf? Or what has he to fear beyond a short imprisonment and an honourable ransom, according to the use of chivalry?"

"Rowena," said De Bracy, "art thou, too, deceived by the common error of thy sex, who think there can be no rivalry but that respecting their own charms? Knowest thou not that our host, Front-de-Bœuf, will push from his road him who opposes his claim to the fair barony of Ivanhoe as readily, eagerly, and unscrupulously as if he were preferred to him by some blue eyed damsel? But smile on my suit, lady, and the wounded champion shall have nothing to fear from Front-de-Bœuf."

"Save him, for the love of Heaven!" said Rowena, her firmness giving way under terror for her lover's impending fate.

"I can—I will," said De Bracy; "for, when Rowena consents to be the bride of De Bracy, who is it shall dare to put forth a violent hand upon her kinsman, the companion of her youth? But it is thy love must buy his protection. Use thine influence with me in his behalf, and he is safe; refuse to employ it, Wilfred dies, and thou thyself art not nearer to freedom. Cedric also—"

"And Cedric also," said Rowena, repeating his words—"my noble—my generous guardian! I deserved the evil I have encountered, for forgetting his fate even in that of his son!"

"Cedric's fate also depends upon thy determination," said De Bracy, "and I leave thee to form it."

After casting her eyes around, as if to look for the aid which was nowhere to be found, and after a few broken interjections, Rowena raised her hands to heaven, and burst into a passion of uncontrolled sorrow. De Bracy was moved, and he paced the apartment to and fro, now vainly exhorting the terrified maiden to compose herself, now hesitating concerning his own line of conduct. He assured her that as yet she had no reason for the excess of despair to which she was now giving way.

But in this task of consolation De Bracy was interrupted by the horn, which had at the same

time alarmed the other inmates of the castle, and interrupted their several plans of avarice and of license. Of them all, perhaps, De Bracy least regretted the interruption ; for his conference with the Lady Rowena had arrived at a point where he found it equally difficult to prosecute or to resign his enterprise.

CHAPTER XXII

While the scenes we have described were passing in other parts of the castle, the Jewess Rebecca awaited her fate in a distant and sequestered turret. On being thrust into a little cell, she found herself in the presence of an old sibyl, who kept murmuring to herself a Saxon rhyme, as if to beat time to the revolving dance which her spindle was performing on the floor. Urfried, for that was the name by which she was called, raised her head as Rebecca entered, and scowled at the fair Jewess.

"Thou wilt have owls for thy neighbours, fair one," said she turning towards Rebecca, "and their screams will be heard as far, and as much

regarded, as thine own. What country art thou of ?—a Saracen or an Egyptian ?—Why dost not answer ?—Thou canst weep, canst thou not speak ? "

" For the sake of mercy," said Rebecca, " tell me what I am to expect. Is it my life they seek, to atone for my religion ? I will lay it down cheerfully."

" Thy life, minion ! " answered the sibyl ; " what would taking thy life pleasure them ? Trust me, thy life is in no peril. Such usage shalt thou have as was once thought good enough for a noble Saxon maiden. I was as young and twice as fair as thou, when Front-de-Bœuf, father of this Reginald, and his Normans, stormed this castle. My father and his seven sons defended their inheritance from story to story, from chamber to chamber. There was not a room, not a step of the stair, that was not slippery with their blood. They died every man ; and ere their bodies were cold, and ere their blood was dried, I had become the prey and the scorn of the conqueror ! "

" Is there no help ? Are there no means of escape ? " said Rebecca. " Richly—richly would I requite thine aid."

" Think not of it," said the hag ; " from hence there is no escape but through the gates

of death ; and it is late, late," she added, shaking her grey head, " ere these open to us—Fare thee well, Jewess! Jew or Gentile, thy fate would be the same ; for thou hast to do with them that have neither scruple nor pity."

" Stay! stay! for Heaven's sake !" said Rebecca—" stay, though it be to curse and revile me ; thy presence is yet some protection."

" The presence of the mother of God were no protection," answered the old woman. " There she stands," pointing to a rude image of the Virgin Mary, " see if she can avert the fate that awaits thee."

She left the room as she spoke, her features writhed into a sort of sneering laugh, which made them seem even more hideous than their habitual frown. She locked the door behind her, and Rebecca might hear her curse every step for its steepness, as slowly and with difficulty she descended the turret stairs.

Prepared by habits of thought to expect adverse circumstances, Rebecca had acquired the firmness necessary for acting under them. Her present situation required all her presence of mind, and she summoned it up accordingly.

Her first care was to inspect the apartment ; but it afforded few hopes either of escape or protection. The single window opened upon an

embattled space surrounding the turret, which had no communication with any other part of the battlements, being an isolated balcony, secured, as usual, by a parapet. There was therefore no hope but in passive fortitude, and in that strong reliance on Heaven natural to great and generous characters.

She trembled, however, and changed colour, when a step was heard on the stair, and the door of the turret chamber slowly opened, and a tall man, dressed as one of those banditti to whom they owed their misfortune, slowly entered, and shut the door behind him ; his cap, pulled down upon his brows, concealed the upper part of his face, and he held his mantle in such a manner as to muffle the rest. Ruffian as his dress bespoke him, he seemed at a loss to express what purpose had brought him thither, so that Rebecca had time to anticipate his explanation. She unclasped two costly bracelets and a collar, which she hastened to proffer to the supposed outlaw, concluding naturally that to gratify his avarice was to bespeak his favour.

" Take them, good friend, and for God's sake be merciful to me and my aged father ! These ornaments are of value, yet are they trifling to what he would bestow to obtain our dismissal from this castle free and uninjured."

"Fair flower of Palestine," replied the outlaw, "ever since I have taken up this wild trade, I have made a vow to prefer beauty to wealth."

"Thou art then no outlaw," said Rebecca; "no outlaw had refused such offers. Thou art a Norman—a Norman, noble perhaps in birth. O, be so in thy actions, and cast off this fearful mask of outrage and violence!"

"And thou, who canst guess so truly," said Brian de Bois-Guilbert, dropping the mantle from his face, "art no true daughter of Israel, but in all save youth and beauty a very witch of Endor."

"What wouldst thou have of me," said Rebecca, "if not my wealth? We can have nought in common between us; you are a Christian, I am a Jewess. Our union were contrary to the laws alike of the church and the synagogue."

"It were so, indeed," replied the Templar, laughing; "wed with a Jewess! Not if she were the Queen of Sheba—Hearken Rebecca: thou art the captive of my bow and spear, subject to my will by the laws of all nations; nor will I abate an inch of my right."

"Stand back," said Rebecca, "stand back, and hear me ere thou offerest to commit a sin so

deadly! My strength thou mayest indeed overpower, for God made women weak, and trusted their defence to man's generosity. But I will proclaim thy villainy, Templar, from one end of Europe to the other. Those who tremble not at thy crime will hold thee accursed."

"Thou art keen-witted, Jewess," replied the Templar, "but loud must be thy voice of complaint, if it is heard beyond the iron walls of this castle; within these, murmurs, laments, appeals to justice, and screams for help die alike silent away. One thing can only save thee, Rebecca. Submit to thy fate, embrace our religion, and thou shalt go forth in such state that many a Norman lady shall yield to the favourite of the best lance among the defenders of the Temple."

"Submit to my fate!" said Rebecca, "and, sacred Heaven, to what fate?—Embrace thy religion! And what religion can it be that harbours such a villain? *Thou* the best lance of the Templars! Craven knight! forsworn priest! I defy thee—The God of Abraham hath opened an escape to his daughter—even from this abyss of infamy!"

As she spoke, she threw open the latticed window which led to the balcony, and in an instant after, stood on the very verge of the parapet, with not the slightest screen between

her and the tremendous depth below. Unprepared for such a desperate effort, Bois-Guilbert had time neither to intercept nor to stop her. As he offered to advance, she exclaimed, "Remain where thou art, proud Templar, or at thy choice advance!—One foot nearer, and I plunge myself from the precipice; my body shall be crushed out of the very form of humanity upon the stones of that courtyard ere it become the victim of thy brutality!"

As she spoke this, she clasped her hands and extended them towards heaven, as if imploring mercy on her soul before she made the final plunge. The Templar hesitated. "Come down," he said, "rash girl! I swear by earth, and sea, and sky, I will offer thee no offence."

"I will not trust thee, Templar," said Rebecca; "thou hast taught me better how to estimate the virtues of thine order."

"You do me injustice," exlaimed the Templar, fervently. "I swear to you by the name which I bear,—by the cross on my bosom, I will do thee no injury whatsoever! If not for thyself, yet for thy father's sake forbear! I will be his friend, and in this castle he will need a powerful one."

"Alas!" said Rebecca, "I know it but too well—Dare I trust thee?"

" May my arms be reversed and my name dishonoured, ", said Brian de Bois-Guilbert, " if thou shalt have reason to complain of me! Many a commandment have I broken, but my word never. "

" I will then trust thee, " said Rebecca, " thus far ; " and she descended from the verge of the battlement, but remained standing close by one of the embrasures. " Here, " she said, " I take my stand. Remain where thou art, and if thou shalt attempt to diminish by one step the distance now between us, thou shalt see that the Jewish maiden will rather trust her soul with God than her honour to the Templar. "

While Rebecca spoke thus, her high and firm resolve, which corresponded so well with the expressive beauty of her countenance, gave to her looks, air, and manner a dignity that seemed more than mortal. Her glance quailed not, her cheek blanched not, for the fear of a fate so instant and so horrible ; on the contrary, the thought that she had her fate at her command, and could escape at will from infamy to death, gave a yet deeper colour of carnation to her complexion, and a yet more brilliant fire to her eye. Bois-Guilbert, proud himself and high-spirited, thought he had never beheld beauty so animated and so commanding.

"Thou needest no longer fear me," he said.

"I fear thee not," replied she, "thanks to him that reared this dizzy tower so high that nought could fall from it and live. Thanks to him, and to the God of Israel! I fear thee not."

"Thou dost me injustice," said the Templar, "I am not naturally hard, selfish and relentless. It was woman that taught me cruelty, and on woman therefore I have exercised it; but not upon such as thou!" He paused a moment, and then added, "Rebecca! she who could prefer death to dishonour must have a proud and a powerful soul. Mine thou must be! Nay, start not," he added, "it must be with thine own consent, and on thine own terms. Thou must consent to share with me hopes more extended than can be viewed from the throne of a monarch! I have sought but a kindred spirit to share them, and I have found such in thee—That bugle-sound announces something which may require my presence. Think on what I have said! Farewell! I will soon return, and hold further conference with thee."

When Rebecca entered the turret-chamber, her first duty was to return thanks to the God of Jacob for the protection which He had afforded her, and to implore its continuance for her and for

her father. Another name glided into her petition; it was that of the wounded Christian, whom fate had placed in the hands of bloodthirsty men, his avowed enemies.

CHAPTER XXIII

When the Templar reached the hall of the castle, he found De Bracy already there.

They were soon after joined by Front-de-Bœuf, who had been disturbed in his tyrannical cruelty in the manner with which the reader is acquainted, and had only tarried to give some necessary directions.

"Let us see the cause of this cursed clamour," said Front-de-Bœuf; "here is a letter, and, if I mistake not, it is in Saxon—Read it, Sir Brian."

The Templar accordingly read it as follows:—

"I, Wamba, the son of Witless, jester to a noble and freeborn man, Cedric of Rotherwood, called the Saxon; and I, Gurth, the son of Beowulph, the swineherd—"

"Thou art mad," said Front-de-Bœuf, interrupting the reader.

"By St. Luke, it is so set down," answered the Templar. Then resuming his task, he went on—

"I, Gurth, the son of Beowulph, swineherd unto the said Cedric, with the assistance of our allies and confederates, who make common cause with us in this our feud, namely, the good knight, called for the present *the Black Sluggard*, and the stout yeoman, Robert Locksley, called Cleave-the-Wand, do you, Reginald Front-de-Bœuf, and your allies and accomplices whomsoever, to wit, that whereas you have, without cause given or feud declared, wrongfully and by mastery seized upon the person of our lord and master the said Cedric; also upon the person of a noble and freeborn damsel, the Lady Rowena of Hargottstandstede; also upon the person of a noble and freeborn man, Athelstane of Coningsburgh; also upon the persons of certain freeborn men, their attendants; also upon certain serfs, their born bondsmen; also upon a certain Jew, named Isaac of York, together with his daughter, a Jewess, and certain horses and mules; which noble persons, with their attendants and slaves, and also with the horses and mules, Jew and Jewess beforesaid, were all in peace with his Majesty, and travelling as liege subjects upon the king's highway; therefore we require and demand that the said noble persons, namely, Cedric of Rotherwood, Rowena of Hargottstandstede, Athelstane of Coningsburgh, with their

servants, attendants and followers, also the horses and mules, Jew and Jewess aforesaid, together with all goods and chattels to them pertaining, be, within an hour after the delivery hereof, delivered to us, or to those whom we shall appoint to receive the same, and that untouched and unharmed in body and goods. Failing of which, we do pronounce to you, that we hold ye as robbers and traitors, and will wager our bodies against ye in battle, siege, or otherwise, and do our utmost to your annoyance and destruction. Wherefore may God have you in His keeping. Signed by us upon the eve of St. Withold's day, under the great trysting oak in the Hart-hill Walk, the above being written by a holy man, clerk to God, our Lady, and St. Dunstan, in the chapel of Copmanhurst."

The knights heard this uncommon document read from end to end, and then gazed upon each other in silent amazement, as being utterly at a loss to know what it could portend. De Bracy was the first to break silence by an uncontrollable fit of laughter, wherein he was joined, though with more moderation, by the Templar. Front-de-Bœuf, on the contrary, seemed impatient of their ill-timed jocularity.

"I give you plain warning," he said, "fair sirs, that you had better consult how to bear yourselves under these circumstances, than give way to such misplaced merriment. These fellows

dared not have acted with such inconceivable impudence, had they not been supported by some strong bands—Here, fellow," he added, to one of his attendants, " hast thou sent out to see by what force this precious challenge is to be supported ? "

" There are at least two hundred men assembled in the woods," answered a squire who was in attendance.

" Here is a proper matter ! " said Front-de-Bœuf ; " this comes of lending you the use of my castle."

" For shame, Sir Knight ! " said the Templar. " Let us summon our people and sally forth upon them.

" Sally, saidst thou ? " answered Front-de-Bœuf ; " we have scarcely men enough to defend the castle."

" Thou dost not fear," said the Templar," that they can assemble in force sufficient to attempt the castle ?

" Not so, Sir Brian," answered Front-de-Bœuf. " These outlaws have indeed a daring captain ; but without machines, scaling ladders, and experienced leaders, my castle may defy them."

" Send to thy neighbours," said the Templar ; " let them assemble their people and come to the rescue of three knights besieged by a jester and

a swineherd in the baronial castle of Reginald Front-de-Bœuf ! ''

"You jest, Sir Knight,'' answered the baron; "but to whom should I send? Malvoisin is by this time at York with his retainers, and so are my other allies; and so should I have been, but for this infernal enterprise. And who shall bear the message? They will beset every path and rip the errand out of his bosom—I have it,'' he added, after pausing for a moment; "Sir Templar, thou canst write as well as read, and thou shalt return an answer to this bold challenge.''

"I would rather do it at the sword's point than at that of the pen,'' said Bois-Guilbert; "but be it as you will.''

He sat down accordingly and indited, in the French language, an epistle of the following tenor:

"Sir Reginald Front-de-Bœuf, with his noble and knightly allies and confederates, receive no defiance at the hands of slaves, bondsmen, or fugitives. If the person calling himself the Black Knight have indeed a claim to the honours of chivalry, he ought to know that he stands degraded by his present association, and has no right to ask reckoning at the hands of good men of noble blood. Touching the prisoners we have made, we do in

Christian charity require you to send a man of religion, to receive their confession and reconcile them with God; since it is our fixed intention to execute them this morning before noon, so that their heads, being placed on the battlements, shall show to all men how lightly we esteem them who have bestirred themselves in their rescue."

This letter, being folded, was delivered to the squire, and by him to the messenger who waited without, as the answer to that which he had brought.

The yeoman, having thus accomplished his mission, returned to the headquarters of the allies, which were for the present established under a venerable oak tree, about three arrow-flights distance from the castle. Here Wamba and Gurth, with their allies the Black Knight and Locksley, and the jovial hermit, awaited with impatience an answer to their summons. Around, and at a distance from them, were seen many a bold yeoman. More than two hundred had already assembled, and others were fast coming in. Those whom they obeyed as leaders were only distinguished from the others by a feather in the cap.

Besides these bands, a less orderly and a worse armed force, consisting of the Saxon inhabitants of the neighbouring township, as

well as many bondsmen and servants from Cedric's extensive estate, had already arrived, for the purpose of assisting in his rescue. Boar-spears, scythes, flails, and the like, were their chief arms; for the Normans, with the usual policy of conquerors, were jealous of permitting to the vanquished Saxons the possession or the use of swords and spears. It was to the leaders of this motley army that the letter of the Templar was now delivered.

Taking the letter from Locksley, the Black Knight first read it over to himself, and then explained the meaning in Saxon to his confederates.

"Execute the noble Cedric!" exlaimed Wamba; "by the rood, thou must be mistaken, Sir Knight."

"Not I, my worthy friend," replied the knight; "I have explained the words as they are here set down."

"Then, by St. Thomas of Canterbury," replied Gurth, "we will have the castle, should we tear it down with our hands!"

"We have nothing else to tear it with," replied Wamba.

"I would," said the Black Knight, "there were some one among us who could obtain admittance into the castle, and discover how the case

stands with the besieged. As they require a confessor to be sent, is there no one here that is qualified to take upon him, for the nonce, this same character ? ''

All looked on each other, and were silent.

'' I see,'' said Wamba, after a short pause, '' that the fool must still be the fool, and put his neck in the venture which wise men shrink from. I trust, with the assistance of the good hermit's frock, I shall be found qualified to administer both worldly and ghostly comfort to our worthy master Cedric and his companions in adversity.''

'' On with the frock, then, good fellow,'' said the Knight, ''and let thy master send us an account of their situation within the castle. Time wears—away with thee.''

''And, in the meantime,'' said Locksley, ''we will beset the place so closely that not so much as a fly shall carry news from thence. So that, my good friend,'' he continued, addressing Wamba, '' thou mayest assure these tyrants that whatever violence they exercise on the persons of their prisoners shall be most severely repaid upon their own.''

'' *Pax vobiscum*,'' said Wamba, who was now muffled in his religious disguise.

And so saying, he imitated the solemn and stately deportment of a friar, and departed to execute his mission.

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CHAPTER XXIV

When the Jester, arrayed in the cowl and frock the hermit, stood before the portal of the castle of Front-de-Bœuf, the warder demanded of him his name and errand.

"*Pax vobiscum,*" answered the Jester, "I am a poor brother of the Order of St. Francis, who come hither to do my office to certain unhappy prisoners now secured within this castle. I pray thee, do mine errand to thy master."

The warder carried to the hall of the castle the intelligence, that a holy friar stood before the gate and demanded instant admission; and he received his master's commands to admit him immediately.

When Wamba found himself in the presence of a man so dreadful, and so much dreaded, as Reginald Front-de-Bœuf, he brought out his

'*Pax vobiscum*' with more anxiety and hesitation than had hitherto accompanied it.

"Who and whence art thou, priest?" said the baron.

"*Pax vobiscum*," reiterated the Jester, "I am a poor servant of St. Francis, who, travelling towards this wilderness, have fallen among thieves who have sent me unto this castle in order to do my ghostly office on two persons condemned by your honourable justice."

"Ay, right," answered Front-de-Bœuf; "and canst thou tell me, holy father, the number of those banditti?"

"Gallant sir," answered the Jester, "I conceive they may be—what of yeomen—what of commons, at least five hundred men."

"What!" said the Templar, who came into the hall that moment, "muster the wasps so thick here? It is time to stifle such a mischievous brood." Then, taking Front-de-Bœuf aside, "Knowest thou the priest?"

"He is a stranger from a distant convent," said Front-de-Bœuf; "I know him not."

"Then trust him not with thy purpose in words," answered the Templar. "Let him carry a written order to De Bracy's company of Free Companions, to repair instantly to their master's aid. In the meantime, permit him to go freely

about his task of preparing these Saxon hogs for the slaughter-house."

"It shall be so," said Front-de-Bœuf. And he forthwith appointed a domestic to conduct Wamba to the apartment where Cedric and Athelstane were confined.

"*Pax vobiscum*," said the Jester, entering the apartment; "the blessing of St. Dunstan, and all other saints whatsoever, be upon ye and about ye."

"Enter freely," answered Cedric to the supposed friar; "with what intent art thou come hither?"

"To bid you prepare yourselves for death," answered the Jester.

"Hearest thou this, Athelstane!" said Cedric. "We must rouse up our hearts to this last action, since better it is we should die like men than live like slaves."

"I am ready," answered Athelstane, "to stand the worst of their malice, and shall walk to my death with as much composure as ever I did to my dinner."

"Let us then unto our holy gear, father," said Cedric.

"Wait yet a moment, good uncle," said the Jester, in his natural tone; "better look long before you leap in the dark."

"By my faith," said Cedric, "I should know that voice!"

"It is that of your trusty slave and jester," answered Wamba, throwing back his cowl. "Take a fool's advice, and you will not be here long."

"How meanest thou, knave?" answered the Saxon.

"Even thus," replied Wamba; "take thou this frock and cord, which are all the orders I ever had, and march quietly out of the castle, leaving me your cloak and girdle to take the long leap in thy stead."

"Leave thee in my stead!" said Cedric, astonished at the proposal; "why, they would hang thee, my poor knave."

"E'en let them do as they are permitted," said Wamba.

"Well, Wamba," answered Cedric, "for one thing will I grant thy request. And that is, if thou wilt make the exchange of garments with Lord Athelstane instead of me. His fathers were monarchs of England. Save him, my trusty Wamba! It is the duty of each who has Saxon blood in his veins."

"No, by St. Dunstan," answered Wamba, "there were little reason in that. I came to save my master, and if he will not consent, I can

but go away home again. I'll hang for no man but my own born master."

"Go, then, noble Cedric," said Athelstane; "neglect not this opportunity. Your presence without may encourage friends to our rescue; your remaining here would ruin us all."

"And is there any prospect, then, of rescue from without?" said Cedric, looking at the Jester.

"Prospect, indeed!" echoed Wamba. "Five hundred men are there without, and I was this morning one of their chief leaders. And so farewell, master, and be kind to poor Gurth and his dog Fangs; and let my cockscomb hang in the hall at Rotherwood, in memory that I flung away my life for my master, like a faithful—fool." The last word came out with a sort of double expression, betwixt jest and earnest.

The tears stood in Cedric's eyes. "Thy memory shall be preserved," he said, "while fidelity and affection have honour upon earth! But that I trust I shall find the means of saving Rowena, and thee, Athelstane, and thee also, my poor Wamba, thou shouldst not overbear me in this matter."

The exchange of dress was now accomplished, when, a sudden doubt struck Cedric.

"I know no language," he said, "but my own, and a few words of their mincing

Norman. How shall I bear myself like a reverend brother ?"

"The spell lies in two words," replied Wamba. "*Pax vobiscum* will answer all queries. If you go or come, eat or drink, bless or ban, *Pax vobiscum* carries you through it all. Speak it but thus, in a deep grave tone—*Pax vobiscum*—it is irresistible."

"If such prove the case," said the master, "my religious orders are soon taken—*Pax vobiscum*. I trust I shall remember the password. Noble Athelstane, farewell ; and farewell, my poor boy, whose heart might make amends for a weaker head ; I will save you, or return and die with you."

"Farewell, noble Cedric," said Athelstane ; "remember, it is the true part of a friar to accept refreshment, if you are offered any."

"Farewell, uncle," added Wamba, "and remember *Pax vobiscum*."

Thus exhorted, Cedric sallied forth upon his expedition : and it was not long ere he had occasion to try the force of that spell which his Jester had recommended as omnipotent. In a low-arched and dusky passage, by which he endeavoured to work his way to the hall of the castle, he was interrupted by a female form.

"*Pax vobiscum* !" said the pseudo friar, and was endeavouring to hurry past, when a soft voice said, "I pray you of dear love, reverend father, that you will deign to visit with your ghostly comfort a wounded prisoner of this castle. Never shall good deed so highly advantage thy convent."

"Daughter," answered Cedric, much embarrassed, "my time in this castle will not permit me to exercise the duties of mine office. I must presently forth; there is life and death upon my speed."

"Yet, father, let me entreat you by the vow you have taken on you," replied the suppliant, "not to leave the oppressed and endangered without counsel or succour."

"May the fiend fly away with me !" answered Cedric impatiently, and would probably have proceeded in the same tone of total departure from his spiritual character, when the colloquy was interrupted by the harsh voice of Urfried, the old crone of the turret.

"How, minion," said she to the female speaker, "is this the manner in which you requite the kindness which permitted thee to leave thy prison cell yonder ? Puttest thou the reverend man to use ungracious language to free himself from the importunities of a Jewess ?"

"A Jewess!" said Cedric, availing himself of the information to get clear of their interruption. "Let me pass, woman! stop me not at your peril. I am fresh from my holy office, and would avoid pollution."

"Come this way, father," said the old hag, "thou art a stranger in this castle, and canst not leave it without a guide. Come hither, for I would speak with thee. And you, daughter of an accursed race, go to the sick man's chamber, and tend him until my return; and woe betide you, if you again quit it without my permission."

Rebecca retreated. Her importunities had prevailed upon Urfried to suffer her to quit the turret, and Urfried had employed her services where she herself would most gladly have paid them, by the bedside of the wounded Ivanhoe.

CHAPTER XXV

Urfried proceeded to conduct the unwilling Cedric into a small apartment, the door of which she heedfully secured. Then fetching from a cupboard a stoup of wine and two flagons, she

placed them on the table, and said in a tone rather asserting a fact than asking a question, "Thou art Saxon, father—Deny it not. The sounds of my native language are sweet to mine ears, though seldom heard here save from the tongues of wretched and degraded serfs."

"Do not Saxon priests visit this castle, then?" replied Cedric.

"They come not; or if they come, they better love to revel at the board of their conquerors," answered Urfried, "than to hear the groans of their countrymen."

"I am a Saxon," answered Cedric, "but unworthy, surely, of the name of priest. Let me begone on my way."

"Stay yet a while," said Urfried; "the accents of the voice which thou hearest now will soon be choked with the cold earth, and I would not descend to it like the beast I have lived. But wine must give me strength to tell the horrors of my tale." She poured out a cup, and drank it with a frightful avidity. "Partake it, father," she added, "if thou wouldst hear my tale without sinking down upon the pavement." Cedric complied with her request.

"I was not born, father," Urfried continued, "the wretch that thou seest me. I was free,

was happy, was honoured, loved and was beloved. Can the wrinkled decrepit hag before thee forget she was once the daughter of the noble thane of Torquilstone, before whose frown a thousand vassals trembled ?''

"Thou the daughter of Torquil Wolfganger !'' said Cedric, receding as he spoke ; "thou—thou—the daughter of that noble Saxon, my father's friend and companion in arms !''

"Thy father's friend !'' echoed Urfried ; "then Cedric the Saxon stands before me, for the noble Hereward of Rotherwood had but one son.''

"It matters not who I am,'' said Cedric ; "proceed, unhappy woman, with thy tale of horror and guilt ! Guilt there must be—there is guilt even in thy living to tell it.''

"There is—there is,'' answered the wretched woman, "deep, black, damning guilt. Yes, in these halls, stained with the noble and pure blood of my father and my brethren—in these very halls, to have lived the paramour of their murderer, was to render every breath which I drew of vital air, a crime and a curse.''

"Wretched woman !'' exclaimed Cedric, "And while the friends of thy father forget not in their prayers the murdered Ulrica, thou

hast lived to merit our hate and execration—lived to unite thyself, and in the bands of lawless love with the vile tyrant who murdered thy nearest and dearest. Wretch ! was there no poniard—no knife—no bodkin ? Had I but dreamed of the daughter of Torquil living in foul communion with the murderer of her father, the sword of a true Saxon had found thee out."

"Wouldst thou indeed have done this justice to the name of Torquil ?" said Ulrica, for we may now lay aside her assumed name of Urfried; "thou art then the true Saxon report speaks of thee !—But tell me, if thou canst, what fate is prepared beyond the grave for her to whom God has assigned on earth a lot of such unspeakable wretchedness ?—Dost thou bid me despair ?"

"I bid thee repent," said Cedric. "Seek prayer and penance, and mayest thou find acceptance ! But I cannot, I will not, longer abide with thee."

"Stay yet a moment !" said Ulrica; "leave me not now, lest the demon who has governed my life should tempt me to avenge myself of thy hard-hearted scorn. Thinkest thou, if Front-de-Bœuf found thee in his castle, in such a disguise, that thy life would be a long one ?"

"Let him tear me to pieces," said Cedric, "ere my tongue say one word which my heart

doth not warrant. I will die a Saxon—true in word, open in deed. Touch me not—stay me not ! ''

" Be it so," said Ulrica, no longer interrupting him; " go thy way, and forget, in the insolence of thy superiority, that the wretch before thee is the daughter of thy father's friend —Go thy way—if I am separated from mankind by my sufferings, not less will I be separated from them in my revenge !—No man shall aid me, but the ears of all men shall tingle to hear of the deed which I shall dare to do !— Farewell ! thy scorn has burst the last tie which seemed yet to unite me to my kind—a thought that my woes might claim the compassion of my people. ''

" Ulrica," said Cedric, softened by this appeal, " hast thou borne up and endured to live through so much guilt and so much misery, and wilt thou now yield to despair when thine eyes are opened to thy crimes, and when repentance were thy fitter occupation ? "

" Cedric," answered Ulrica, " thou little knowest the human heart. To act as I have acted, to think as I have thought, requires the maddening love of pleasure, mingled with the keen appetite of revenge, the proud consciousness of power. Their force has long passed away—

Age has no pleasures, wrinkles have no influence, revenge itself dies away in impotent curses. Then comes remorse, with all its vipers, mixed with vain regrets for the past, and despair for the future—then, when all other strong impulses have ceased, we become like fiends in hell, who may feel remorse, but never repentance—But thy words have awakened a new soul within me. Well hast thou said, all is possible for those who dare to die ! Thou hast shown me the means of revenge, and be assured I will embrace them. And thou thyself shalt say that, whatever was the life of Ulrica, her death well became the daughter of the noble Torquil. There is a force without beleaguering this accursed castle; hasten to lead them to the attack, and when thou shalt see a red flag wave from the turret on the eastern angle of the donjon, press the Normans hard ; they will then have enough to do within, and you may win the wall in spite of both bow and mongonel—Begone I pray thee—follow thine own fate, and leave me to mine."

Cedric would have inquired further into the purpose which she thus darkly announced, but the stern voice of Front-de-Bœuf was heard exclaiming, " Where tarries this loitering priest ? I will make a martyr of him, if he

loiters here to hatch treason among my domestics !"

"What a true prophet," said Ulrica, "is an evil conscience !"

As she thus spoke, she vanished through a private door, and Reginald Front-de-Bœuf entered the apartment.

"Thy penitents, father, have made a long shrift; it is the better for them, since it is the last they shall ever make. Hast thou prepared them for death ?"

"I found them," said Cedric, in such French as he could command, "expecting the worst, from the moment they knew into whose power they had fallen."

"How now, Sir Friar," replied Front-de-Bœuf, "thy speech, methinks, smacks of a Saxon tongue ?"

"I was bred in the convent of St. Withold of Burton," answered Cedric.

"Ay ?" said the Baron; "it had been better for thee to have been a Norman, and better for my purpose too; but need has no choice of messengers. Follow me through this passage, that I may dismiss thee by the postern."

And as he strode on his way before the supposed friar, Front-de-Bœuf thus schooled him in the part which he desired he should act.

"Thou seest, Sir Friar, yon herd of Saxon swine, who have dared to environ this castle of Torquilstone. Tell them whatever thou hast a mind of the weakness of this fortalice, or aught else that can detain them before it for twenty-four hours. Meantime bear thou this scroll to the castle of Philip de Malvoisin; say it cometh from me, and is written by the Templar Baron de Bois-Guilbert, and that I pray him to send it to York with all the speed man and horse can make."

Front-de-Bœuf then led the way to a postern, where, passing the moat on a single plank, they reached a small barbican, or exterior defence, which communicated with the open field by a well-fortified sallyport.

"Begone, then; and if thou wilt do mine errand, and if thou return hither when it is done, thou shalt see Saxon flesh cheap as ever was hog's in the shambles of Sheffield."

"Assuredly we shall meet again," answered Cedric.

"Something in hand the whilst," continued the Norman; and, as they parted at the postern door, he thrust into Cedric's reluctant hand a gold byzant, adding, "Remember, I will flay off both cowl and skin if thou failest in thy purpose."

"And full leave will I give thee to do both," answered Cedric, leaving the postern, and striding forth over the free field with a joyful step, "if, when we meet next, I deserve not better at thine hand." Turning then back towards the castle, he threw the piece of gold towards the donor, exclaiming at the same time, "False Norman, thy money perish with thee!"

Front-de-Bœuf heard the words imperfectly, but the action was suspicious. "Archers," he called to the warders on the outward battlements, "send me an arrow through yon monk's frock! Yet stay," he said, as his retainers were bending their bows, "it avails not; we must thus far trust him since we have no better shift. I think he dares not betray me. Ho! Giles jailor, let them bring Cedric of Rotherwood before me in the armoury, and the other churl, his companion—him I mean of Coningsburgh—Athelstane there, or whatever they call him."

His commands were obeyed; and upon entering the apartment, Front-de-Bœuf found the two Saxon captives under guard. He took a long draught of wine, and then addressed his prisoners.

"Gallants of England," said he, "how relish ye your entertainment at Torquilstone? By God and St. Denis, if ye pay not the richer ransom, I will hang ye up by the feet from the

iron bars of these windows. Speak out, ye Saxon dogs,—what bid ye for your worthless lives? How say you, you of Rotherwood?"

"Not a doit I," answered poor Wamba, "and for hanging up by the feet, my brain has ever been topsy-turvy; so turning me upside down may peradventure restore it again."

"St. Genevieve!" said Front-de-Bœuf, "what have we got here?"

And with the back of his hand he struck Cedric's cap from the head of the Jester, and throwing open his collar, discovered the fatal badge of servitude, the silver collar round his neck.

"Giles—Clement—dogs and varlets!" exclaimed the furious Norman, "what have you brought me here?"

"I think I can tell you," said De Bracy, who just then entered the apartment. "This is Cedric's clown who fought so manful a skirmish with Isaac of York about a question of precedence."

"I shall settle it for them both," replied Front-de-Bœuf; "they shall hang on the same gallows, unless his master and this boar of Coningsburgh will pay well for their lives. Go," said he to two of his attendants, "fetch me the right Cedric hither."

His followers, lingering and loth, faltered forth their belief that, if this were not Cedric who was there in presence, they knew not what was become of him.

"Saints of heaven!" exclaimed De Bracy, "he must have escaped in the monk's garments!"

"Fiends of hell!" echoed Front-de-Bœuf, "it was then the boar of Rotherwood whom I ushered to the postern, and dismissed with my own hands! And thou," he said to Wamba, "whose folly could overreach the wisdom of idiots yet more gross than thyself—I will give thee holy orders—I will shave thy crown for thee! Here, let them tear the scalp from his head, and then pitch him headlong from the battlements. Thy trade is to jest, canst thou jest now?"

"You deal with me better than your word, noble knight," whimpered forth poor Wamba, whose habits of buffoonery were not to be overcome even by the immediate prospect of death; "if you give me the red cap you propose, out of a simple monk you will make a cardinal."

"The poor wretch," said De Bracy, "is resolved to die in his vocation. Front-de-Bœuf, you shall not slay him. Give him to me to make sport for my Free Companions. How sayest thou, knave?"

"Ay, with my master's leave," said Wamba; "for, look you, I must not slip collar" (and he touched that which he wore) "without his permission."

"Thou dost well, De Bracy," said Front-de-Bœuf, "to stand there listening to a fool's jargon, when destruction is gaping for us? Seest thou not we are overreached, and that our proposed mode of communicating with our friends without has been disconcerted by this same motley gentleman? What views have we to expect but instant storm?"

"To the battlements then," said De Bracy; "when didst thou ever see me the graver for the thoughts of battle? Here, Saxon," he continued, addressing Athelstane, and handing the cup to him, "rinse thy throat with that noble liquor, and rouse up thy soul to say what thou wilt do for thy liberty."

"Dismiss me free with my companions," answered Athelstane, "and I will pay a ransom of a thousand marks."

"And wilt moreover assure us the retreat of that scum of mankind who are swarming around the castle?" said Front-de-Bœuf.

"In so far as I can," answered Athelstane, "I will withdraw them; and I fear not but that my father Cedric will do his best to assist me."

"We are agreed then," said Front-de-Bœuf; "thou and they are to be set at freedom, and peace is to be on both sides, for payment of a thousand marks. But mark, this extends not to the Jew Isaac."

"Nor to the Jew Isaac's daughter," said the Templar, who had now joined them.

"Neither does the ransom include the Lady Rowena," said De Bracy.

"The Lady Rowena," answered Athelstane, with the most steady countenance, "is my affianced bride. I will be drawn by wild horses before I consent to part with her."

"Thy affianced bride! The Lady Rowena the affianced bride of a vassal like thee!" said De Bracy. "Saxon, thou dreamest that the days of thy seven kingdoms are returned again. I tell thee, the princes of the house of Anjou confer not their wards on men of such lineage as thine."

The conversation was now interrupted by the arrival of a menial, who announced that a monk demanded admittance at the postern gate.

"In the name of St. Bennet," said Front-de-Bœuf, "have we a real monk this time, or another impostor? Search him, slaves; for if ye suffer a second impostor to be palmed upon you, I will have your eyes torn out, and hot coals put into the sockets."

" Let me endure the extremity of your anger, my lord," said Giles, " if this be not a real shaveling. Your squire Jocelyn knows him well, and will vouch him to be Brother Ambrose, a monk in attendance upon the Prior of Jorvaulx."

" Admit him," said Front-de-Bœuf ; " most likely he brings us news from his jovial master. Remove these prisoners ; and, Saxon, think on what thou hast heard."

The Saxon prisoners were removed, just as they introduced the monk Ambrose, who appeared to be in great perturbation.

" Holy Mother ! " said the monk, as he addressed the assembled knights, " I am at last safe and in Christian keeping ! Be it known to you, brave knights, that certain murderous caitiffs, casting behind them fear of God and reverence of His Church "—

" Brother priest," said the Templar, "all this we know or guess at ; tell us plainly, is thy master, the Prior, made prisoner, and to whom ? "

" Surely," said Ambrose, " he is in the hands of the infesters of these woods. They have rifled his mails and budgets, and stripped him of two hundred marks of gold, and they do yet demand of him a large sum besides, ere they will suffer him to depart from their hands. Wherefore the reverend father in God prays you,

as his dear friends, to rescue him, either by paying down the ransom at which they hold him, or by force of arms, at your best discretion."

"The foul fiend quell the Prior!" said Front-de-Bœuf. "When did thy master hear of a Norman baron unbuckling his purse to relieve a churchman? And how can we do aught by valour to free him, that are cooped up here by ten times our number?"

"And that was what I was about to tell you," said the monk; "it is of verity that they assemble a camp, and raise a bank against the walls of this castle."

"To the battlements!" cried De Bracy, "and let us mark what these knaves do without;" and so saying, he opened a latticed window which led to a projecting balcony, and immediately called from thence to those in the apartment—"Saint Denis, but the old monk hath brought true tidings!"

Reginald Front-de-Bœuf also looked out upon the field, and immediately snatched his bugle; and after winding a long and loud blast, commanded his men to their posts on the walls.

"De Bracy," said he, "look to the eastern side where the walls are lowest. Noble Bois-Guilbert, look thou to the western side. I myself will take post at the barbican. Yet, do

not confine your exertions to any one spot, noble friends ! We must this day be everywhere. Ho! there, Anselm! see that seething pitch and oil are ready to pour on the heads of these audacious traitors. Look that the cross-bowmen lack not bolts. Fling abroad my banner with the old bull's head; the knaves shall soon find with whom they have to do this day !"

The Templar had in the meantime been looking out on the proceedings of the besiegers, with rather more attention than the brutal Front-de-Bœuf or his giddy companion.

"By the faith of mine order," he said, "these men approach with more touch of discipline than could have been judged. I spy neither banner nor pennon among them, and yet will I gage my golden chain that they are led on by some noble knight or gentleman, skilful in the practice of wars.

"I espy him," said De Bracy; "I see the waving of a knight's crest, and the gleam of his armour. See yon tall man in the black mail ? By St. Denis, I hold him to be the same who overthrew thee Front-de-Bœuf, in the lists at Ashby."

"So much the better," said Front-de-Bœuf, "that he comes here to give me my revenge."

The demonstrations of the enemy's immediate approach cut off all further discussion. Each knight now repaired to his post, and at the head of the few followers whom they were able to muster, they awaited the threatened assault.

CHAPTER XXVI

When Ivanhoe had sunk down in the lists at Ashby, and seemed abandoned by all the world, it was the importunity of Rebecca which prevailed on her father to have him transported to the house which, for the time, the Jews inhabited in the suburbs of Ashby.

Arrived there she proceeded with her own hands to examine and to bind up his wounds. Her knowledge of medicine and of the healing art had been acquired under an aged Jewess, the daughter of one of their most celebrated doctors, who had loved Rebecca as her own child, and was believed to have communicated to her secrets which had been left to herself by her sage father. The fate of Miriam had

indeed been to fall a sacrifice to the fanaticism of the times; but her secrets had survived in her apt pupil.

Ivanhoe was still in a state of unconsciousness. Rebecca examined the wound, and having applied to it such remedies as her art prescribed, informed her father that if fever could be averted, there was nothing to fear for his guest's life, and prevailed upon him to consent to her proposal that Ivanhoe should go with them to York and stay in their house until his wounds were healed.

It was not until evening was nearly closed that Ivanhoe was restored to consciousness of his situation. To his great surprise, he found himself in a room magnificently furnished, but having cushions instead of chairs to rest upon, and in other respects partaking so much of Oriental custom that he began to doubt whether he had not, during his sleep, been transported back again to the land of Palestine. The impression was increased when, the tapestry being drawn aside, a female form, dressed in a rich habit, which partook more of the Eastern taste than of the Europcan, glided through the door and was followed by a swarthy domestic.

As the wounded knight was about to address this fair apparition, she imposed silence by

placing her slender finger upon her ruby lips, while the attendant, approaching him, proceeded to uncover Ivanhoe's side, and the lovely Jewess satisfied herself that the bandage was in its place, and the wound doing well. She performed her task with a graceful and dignified simplicity and modesty. Her few and brief directions were given in Hebrew to the old domestic, who obeyed them in silence.

Without making an attempt at further question, Ivanhoe suffered them to take the measures they thought most proper for his recovery ; and it was not until these were completed, and his kind physician was about to retire, that his curiosity could no longer be suppressed. "Gentle maiden," he began in Arabic with which his Eastern travels had rendered him familiar, "I pray you of your courtesy—"

But here he was interrupted by his fair physician, a smile, which she could scarce suppress, dimpling for an instant a face whose general expression was that of contemplative melancholy. "I am of England, Sir Knight, and speak the English tongue, although my dress and my lineage belong to another climate."

"Noble damsel—" again the Knight of Ivanhoe began, and again Rebecca hastened to interrupt him.

"Bestow not on me, Sir Knight," she said, "the epithet of noble. It is well you should speedily know that your handmaiden is a poor Jewess, the daughter of that Isaac of York to whom you were so lately a good and kind lord."

The glance of respectful admiration, not altogether unmixed with tenderness, with which Ivanhoe had hitherto regarded his unknown benefactress, was exchanged at once for a manner cold, composed and collected. But the gentleness and candour of Rebecca's nature imputed no fault to him for sharing in the universal prejudices of his age and religion—She informed him of the necessity they were under of removing to York, and of her father's resolution to transport him thither, and tend him in his own house until his health should be restored. Ivanhoe expressed great repugnance to this plan, which he grounded on unwillingness to give further trouble to his benefactors.

"Was there not," he said, "in Ashby, or near it, some Saxon franklin, or even some wealthy peasant, who would endure the burden of a wounded countryman's residence with him until he should be again able to bear his armour? Was there no convent of Saxon endowment, where he could be received?"

"Any, the worst of these harbourages," said Rebecca, with a melancholy smile, "would unquestionably be more fitting for your residence than the abode of a despised Jew; yet, Sir Knight, unless you would dismiss your physician, you cannot change your lodging. Our nation, as you well know, can cure wounds, though we deal not in inflicting them; and in our family, in particular, are secrets which have been handed down since the days of Solomon. No Nazarene—I crave your forgiveness, Sir Knight—no Christian leech, within the four seas of Britain, could enable you to bear your corslet within a month."

"And how soon wilt *thou* enable me to brook it?" said Ivanhoe, impatiently.

"Within eight days, if thou wilt be patient and conformable to my directions," replied Rebecca.

"By our Blessed Lady," said Wilfred, "it is no time for me or any true knight to be bed-ridden; and if thou accomplish thy promise, maiden, I will pay thee with my casque full of crowns, come by them as I may."

"I will accomplish my promise," said Rebecca, "and thou shalt bear thine armour on the eighth day from hence, if thou wilt grant me but one boon in the stead of the silver thou dost promise me."

"If it be within my power, and such as a true Christian knight may yield to one of thy people," replied Ivanhoe, " I will grant thy boon blithely and thankfully."

" Nay," answered Rebecca, " I will but pray of thee to believe henceforward that a Jew may do good service to a Christian, without desiring other guerdon than the blessing of the Great Father who made both Jew and Gentile."

" It were sin to doubt it, maiden," replied Ivanhoe. "And now, my kind leech, let me inquire of the news abroad. What of the noble Saxon Cedric and his household ? What of the lovely Lady—" He stopped as if unwilling to speak Rowena's name in the house of a Jew— "Of her, I mean, who was named Queen of the tournament ? "

"And who was selected by you, Sir Knight, to hold that dignity, with judgment which was admired as much as your valour," replied Rebecca.

A flush crossed Ivanhoe's cheek, as he felt that he had incautiously betrayed his deep interest in Rowena by the awkward attempt he had made to conceal it. " It was less of her I would speak," said he, " than of Prince John ; and I would fain know somewhat of a faithful squire, and why he now attends me not."

"Let me use my authority as a leech," answered Rebecca, "and enjoin you to keep silence, and avoid agitating reflections, whilst I apprise you of what you desire to know. Prince John hath broken off the tournament, and set forward in all haste towards York, with the nobles, knights and churchmen of his party. It is said he designs to assume his brother's crown."

"Not without a blow struck in his defence," said Ivanhoe, raising himself upon the couch, "if there were but one true subject in England. I will fight for Richard's title with the best of them!"

"But that you may be able to do so," said Rebecca, touching his shoulder with her hand, "you must now observe my directions, and remain quiet."

"True, maiden," said Ivanhoe, "as quiet as these disquieted times will permit. And of Cedric and his household?"

"His steward came but brief while since," said the Jewess, "panting with haste, to ask my father for the price of wool, the growth of Cedric's flocks, and from him I learned that Cedric and Athelstane of Coningsburgh had left Prince John's lodging in high displeasure, and were about to set forth on their return homeward."

"Went any lady with them to the banquet?" asked Wilfred.

"The Lady Rowena," answered Rebecca, "went not to the Prince's feast, and is now on her journey back to Rotherwood with her guardian Cedric. And touching your faithful squire Gurth—"

"Ha!" exclaimed the knight, "knowest thou his name?—But thou dost," he immediately added, "and well thou mayest, for it was from thy hand, and, as I am now convinced, from thine own generosity of spirit, that he received but yesterday a hundred zecchins."

"Speak not of that," said Rebecca, blushing deeply.

"But this sum of gold," said Ivanhoe gravely, "my honour is concerned in repaying it to your father—Just one word of the fate of poor Gurth, and I have done with questioning thee."

"I grieve to tell thee, Sir Knight," answered the Jewess, "that he is in custody by the order of Cedric." And then observing the distress which her communication gave to Wilfred, she instantly added, "But the steward Oswald said, that if nothing occurred to renew his master's displeasure against him, he was sure that Cedric would pardon Gurth."

"It seems as if I were destined to bring ruin on whomsoever hath shown kindness to me,"

said Ivanhoe. "Thou seest, maiden, what an ill-fated wretch thou dost labour to assist; be wise, and let me go, ere the misfortunes which track my footsteps like slot-hounds shall involve thee also in their pursuit."

"Nay," said Rebecca, "thy weakness and thy grief, Sir Knight, make thee miscalculate the purposes of Heaven. Thou hast been restored to thy country when it most needed the assistance of a strong hand and a true heart, and thou hast humbled the pride of thine enemies and thy king's. Therefore, be of good courage, and trust that thou art preserved for some marvel which thine arm shall work. Adieu; and having taken the medicine which I shall send thee by the hand of Reuben, compose thyself again to rest."

Ivanhoe was convinced by the reasoning, and obeyed the directions of Rebecca. The draught which Reuben administered secured the patient sound and undisturbed slumbers. In the morning his kind physician found him entirely free from feverish symptoms, and fit to undergo the fatigue of a journey.

He was deposited in the horse-litter which had brought him from the lists, and every precaution taken for his travelling with ease. Isaac had ever the fear of robbery before his

eyes. He therefore journeyed at a great rate, and made short halts and shorter repasts, so that he passed by Cedric and Athelstane, who had several hours the start of him. The rapidity with which he insisted on travelling bred several disputes between him and the party whom he had hired to attend him as a guard. And thus it happened, that when the alarm of danger approached, he was deserted by the discontented mercenaries.

In this deplorable condition, the Jew, with his daughter and his wounded patient, were found by Cedric, as has already been noticed, and soon afterwards they fell into the power of De Bracy and his confederates. Little notice was at first taken of the horse-litter and it might have remained behind but for the curiosity of De Bracy, who looked into it under the impression that it might contain the object of his enterprise. But De Bracy's astonishment was considerable when he discovered that the litter contained a wounded man, who, conceiving himself to have fallen into the power of Saxon outlaws, with whom his name might be a protection for himself and his friends, frankly avowed himself to be Wilfred of Ivanhoe.

The ideas of chivalrous honour, which, amidst his wildness and levity, never utterly abandoned

De Bracy, prohibited him from doing the knight any injury in his defenceless condition, and equally interdicted his betraying him to Front-de-Bœuf, who would have had no scruples to put to death the rival claimant of the fief of Ivanhoe. On the other hand, to liberate a suitor preferred by the Lady Rowena, was a pitch far above the flight of De Bracy's generosity. A middle course betwixt good and evil was all which he found himself capable of adopting, and he commanded two of his own squires to keep close by the litter, and to suffer no one to approach it. On arriving at Torquilstone, De Bracy's squires conveyed Ivanhoe under the name of a wounded comrade, to a distant apartment.

Here his charge was transferred to Ulrica, but she, whose brain was burning with remembrance of injuries and with hopes of vengeance, was readily induced to devolve upon Rebecca the care of her patient.

CHAPTER XXVII

In finding herself once more by the side of Ivanhoe, Rebecca was astonished at the keen sensation of pleasure which she experienced, even

at a time when all around them both was danger, if not despair. As she felt his pulse, and inquired after his health, her voice faltered and her hand trembled, and it was only the cold question of Ivanhoe, "Is it you, gentle maiden?" which recalled her to herself, and reminded her that the sensations which she felt were not and could not be mutual. A sigh escaped, but it was scarce audible; and the questions which she asked the knight concerning his state of health were put in the tone of calm friendship. Ivanhoe answered her hastily that he was, in point of health, better than he could have expected.

"My mind, gentle maiden," he continued, "is more disturbed by anxiety than my body with pain. From the speeches of these men who were my warders just now, I learn that I am a prisoner, and if I judge aright of the loud hoarse voice which even now despatched them hence on some military duty, I am in the castle of Front-de-Bœuf. If so, how will this end, or how can I protect Rowena and my father?"

"He names not the Jew or Jewess," said Rebecca, internally. "How justly am I punished by Heaven for letting my thoughts dwell upon him!" She hastened after this brief self-accusation to give Ivanhoe what information she could; but it amounted only to this, that

the Templar Bois-Guilbert and the Baron Front-de-Bœuf were commanders within the castle ; that it was beleaguered from without, but by whom she knew not. She added that there was a Christian priest within the castle who might be possessed of more information.

" A Christian priest ! " said the knight, joyfully; " fetch him hither, Rebecca, if thou canst. Say a sick man desires his ghostly counsel."

Rebecca, in compliance with the wishes of Ivanhoe, made that attempt to bring Cedric into the wounded knight's chamber which was defeated, as we have already seen, by the interference of Urfried, who had been also on the watch to intercept the supposed monk. Rebecca then retired to communicate to Ivanhoe the result of her errand.

The noise within the castle, occasioned by the defensive preparations, now increased into tenfold bustle and clamour. The heavy step of the men-at-arms traversed the battlements, or resounded on the narrow and winding passages and stairs which led to the various points of defence. The voices of the knights were heard, animating their followers, or directing means of defence. Rebecca's eye kindled, although the blood fled from her cheeks ; and there was a strong mixture of fear, and of a thrilling sense of the sublime, as

she repeated, half-whispering to herself, half-speaking to her companion, the sacred text—"The quiver rattleth—the glittering spear and the shield—the noise of the captains and the shouting!"

"If I could but drag myself," said Ivanhoe, "to yonder window, that I might see how this brave game is like to go! If I had but bow to shoot a shaft, or battle-axe to strike, were it but a single blow for our deliverance! It is in vain—it is in vain—I am alike nerveless and weaponless!"

"Fret not thyself, noble knight," answered Rebecca, "the sounds have ceased of a sudden: it may be they join not battle."

"Thou knowest nought of it," said Wilfred, impatiently; "this dead pause only shows that the men are at their posts on the walls, and expect an instant attack. Could I but reach yonder window!"

"Thou wilt but injure thyself by the attempt, noble knight," replied his attendant. Observing his extreme solicitude however, she added, "I myself will stand at the lattice, and describe to you as I can what passes without."

"You must not—you shall not!" exclaimed Ivanhoe. "Each lattice, each aperture, will be soon a mark for the archers; some random shaft—."

"It shall be welcome!" murmured Rebecca, as with firm pace she ascended two or three steps, which led to the window.

"Rebecca—dear Rebecca!" exclaimed Ivanhoe, "this is no maiden's pastime; do not expose thyself to wounds and death, and render me for ever miserable for having given the occasion; at least, cover thyself with yonder ancient buckler, and show as little of thy person at the lattice as may be."

Following the directions of Ivanhoe, and availing herself of the protection of the large ancient shield, which she placed against the lower part of the window, Rebecca, with tolerable security to herself, could witness part of what was passing without the castle, and report to Ivanhoe the preparations which the assailants were making for the storm.

"The skirts of the wood seemed lined with archers," she said, "although only a few are advanced from its dark shadow."

"Seest thou who they be that act as leaders?" asked Ivanhoe.

"A knight, clad in sable armour, is the most conspicuous," said the Jewess, "and seems to assume the direction of all around him."

"What device does he bear on his shield?" replied Ivanhoe.

" Something resembling a bar of iron, and a padlock painted blue on the black shield."

" A fetterlock and shackle-bolt azure," replied Ivanhoe; " I know not who may bear the device, but well I ween it might now be mine own. Canst thou not see the motto ? "

" Scarce the device itself at this distance," replied Rebecca. " They appear even now preparing to advance—God of Zion protect us !—What a dreadful sight !—Those who advance first bear huge shields and defences made of plank ; the others follow, bending their bows as they come on—They raise their bows !—God of Moses, forgive the creatures Thou hast made ! "

Her description was here suddenly interrupted by the signal for assault, which was given by the blast of a shrill bugle, and at once answered by a flourish of the Norman trumpets from the battlements. The shouts of both parties augmented the fearful din, the assailants crying, " Saint George for merry England ! " and the Normans answering them with the loud war-cries of their different commanders.

The desperate efforts of the assailants were met by an equally vigorous defence on the part of the besieged. The archers, trained by their woodland pastimes to the most effective use of the long-bow, shot, to use the appropriate phrase

of the time, so "wholly together," that no point at which a defender could show the least part of his person escaped their cloth-yard shafts. The whizzing of shafts and of missiles on both sides was only interrupted by the shouts which arose when either side inflicted or sustained some notable loss.

"And I must lie here like a bedridden monk," exclaimed Ivanhoe, "while the game that gives me freedom or death is played out by the hand of others!—Look from the window once again, kind maiden, but beware that thou art not marked by the archers beneath. Look out once more, and tell me if they yet advance to the storm. What dost thou see, Rebecca?"

"Nothing but the cloud of arrows flying so thick as to dazzle mine eyes, and to hide the bowmen who shoot them."

"That cannot endure," said Ivanhoe; "if they press not right on to carry the castle by pure force of arms, the archery may avail but little against stone walls and bulwarks. Look for the Knight of the Fetterlock, fair Rebecca, and see how he bears himself."

"I see him not," said Rebecca.

"Foul craven!" exclaimed Ivanhoe; "does he blench from the helm when the wind blows highest?"

"He blenches not!—he blenches not!" said Rebecca, "I see him now; he heads a body of men close under the outer barrier of the barbican—They pull down the piles and palisades; they hew down the barriers with axes—His high black plume floats abroad over the throng. They have made a breach in the barriers—they rush in—they are thrust back! Front-de-Bœuf and the Black Knight fight hand to hand on the breach." She then uttered a loud shriek, and exclaimed, "He is down!—he is down!"

"Who is down?" carried Ivanhoe; "for our dear Lady's sake, tell me which has fallen?"

"The Black Knight," answered Rebecca, faintly; then, instantly again shouted with joyful eagerness—"But no—but no! the name of the Lord of Hosts be blessed! He is on foot again, and fights as if there were twenty men's strength in his single arm—His sword is broken—he snatches an axe from a yeoman—he presses Front-de-Bœuf with blow on blow. The giant stoops and totters—he falls—he falls!"

"Front-de-Boeuf?" exclaimed Ivanhoe.

"Front-de-Bœuf." answered the Jewess. "His men rush to the rescue, headed by the haughty Templar; their united force compels the champion to pause. They drag Front-de-Bœuf within the walls."

" The assailants have won the barriers, have they not ? " said Ivanhoe.

"They have—they have !" exclaimed Rebecca : "and they press the besieged hard upon the outer wall ; some plant ladders, some swarm like bees and endeavour to ascend upon the shoulders of each other—down go stones, beams, and trunks of trees upon their heads. Great God ! Hast thou given men Thine own image that it should be thus cruelly defaced by the hands of their brethren ! "

" Think not of that," said Ivanhoe ; " this is no time for such thoughts—Who yield ?—Who push their way ? "

" The ladders are thrown down," replied Rebecca shuddering; " the soldiers lie grovelling under them like crushed reptiles—The besieged have the better."

" St. George strike for us ! " exclaimed the knight ; " do the false yeomen give way ? "

" No ! " exclaimed Rebecca, " they bear themselves right yeomanly—The Black Knight approaches the postern with his huge axe—the thundering blows which he deals, you may hear them above all the din and shouts of the battle—Stones and beams are hailed down on the bold champion—he regards them no more than if they were thistle-down or feathers ! "

"By St. John of Acre," said Ivanhoe, raising himself joyfully on his couch, "methought there was but one man in England that might do such a deed."

"The postern gate shakes," continued Rebecca —"it crashes—it is splintered by his blows—they rush in—the outwork is won. Oh God! they hurl the defenders from the battlements—they throw them into the moat. O men, if ye be indeed men, spare them that can resist no longer!"

"The bridge—which communicates with the castle—have they won that pass?" exclaimed Ivanhoe.

"No," replied Rebecca; "the Templar has destroyed the plank on which they crossed; a few of the defenders have escaped with him into the castle—the shrieks and cries which you hear tell the fate of the others—Alas!—I see it is still more difficult to look upon victory than upon battle! It is over for the time, and our friends strengthen themselves within the outwork which they have mastered."

"Seest thou nought, Rebecca," said Ivanhoe, "by which the Black Knight may be distinguished?"

"Nothing," said the Jewess; "all about him is black as the wing of the night raven. But having once seen him put forth his strength in

battle, methinks I could know him again among a thousand warriors. There is more than mere strength in him—there seems as if the whole soul and spirit of the champion were given to every blow which he deals upon his enemies."

"Rebecca," said Ivanhoe, "thou hast painted a hero; surely they rest but to refresh their force, or to provide the means of crossing the moat. Under such a leader as thou hast spoken this knight to be, there are no craven fears, no cold-blooded delays. I swear by the honour of my house, I would endure ten years' captivity to fight one day by that good knight's side in such a quarrel as this."

"Alas!" said Rebecca, leaving her station at the window, and approaching the couch of the wounded knight, "this impatient yearning after action will not fail to injure your returning health. How couldst thou hope to inflict wounds on others, ere those be healed which thou thyself hast received?"

"Rebecca," he replied, "the love of battle is the food upon which we live. We live not—we wish not to live—longer than while we are victorious and renowned. Such, maiden, are the laws of chivalry to which we are sworn, and to which we offer all that we hold dear."

"Alas!" said the fair Jewess, "and what is it, valiant knight, save an offering of sacrifice

to a demon of vain glory? What remains to you as the prize of all the blood you have spilled, when death hath broken the strong man's spear, and overtaken the speed of his war-horse?"

"What remains?" cried Ivanhoe. "Glory, maiden, glory! Thou speakest, maiden, of thou knowest not what. Thou art no Christian, Rebecca; and to thee are unknown those high feelings which swell the bosom of a noble maiden when her lover hath done some deed of emprize which sanctions his flame."

"How little he knows this bosom," said Rebecca to herself, "to imagine that cowardice or meanness of soul must needs be its guests, because I have censured the fantastic chivalry of the Nazarenes! Would to heaven that the shedding of mine own blood, drop by drop, could avail to set free my father, and this his benefactor, from the chains of the oppressor!"

She then looked towards the couch of the wounded knight.

"He sleeps," she said. "Alas! is it a crime that I should look upon him, when it may be for the last time?—And my father!—oh, my father! evil is it with his daughter, when his grey hairs are not remembered because of the golden looks of youth!—But I will tear this

folly from my heart, though every fibre bleed as I rend it away !"

She wrapped herself closely in her veil, and sat down at a distance from the couch of the wounded knight, with her back turned towards it, fortifying or endeavouring to fortify her mind not only against the impending evils from without, but also against those treacherous feelings which assailed her from within.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The lord of the beleaguered and endangered castle lay upon a bed of bodily pain and mental agony. The moment had now arrived when earth and all its treasures were gliding from before his eyes, and when the savage baron's heart became appalled as he gazed forward into the waste darkness of futurity.

"Where be these dog-priests now," growled the baron, "who set such price on their ghostly mummery ?—Where be all those unshod Carmelites for whom old Front-de-Bœuf founded

the convent of St. Anne ?—I have heard old men talk of prayer—prayers by their own voice—such need not to court or to bribe the false priest. But I—I dare not ! ''

" Lives Reginald Front-de-Bœuf,'' said a broken and shrill voice close by his beside, " to say there is that which he dares not ? Think on thy sins, Front-de-Bœuf, on rebellion, on rapine, on murder ! Who stirred up the licentious John to war against his grey-headed father—against his generous brother ? ''

" Be thou fiend, priest, or devil,'' replied Front-de-Bœuf, " thou liest in thy throat ! Not I stirred John to rebellion—not I alone. False fiend, I defy thee! Depart, and haunt my couch no more. Let me die in peace.''

" In peace thou shalt NOT die,'' repeated the voice ; " even in death shalt thou think on thy murders—on the groans which this castle has echoed—on the blood that is engrained in its floors !—Foul parricide, think of thy father !—think of his death !—think of his banquet-room flooded with his gore, and that poured forth by the hands of a son ! ''

" Ha! '' answered the Baron, after a long pause, " if thou knowest that, thou art indeed the Author of Evil. That secret I deemed locked in my own breast, and in that of one besides—

the temptress, the partaker of my guilt. Go, leave me, fiend ! and seek the Saxon witch Ulrica, who alone could tell thee what she and I alone witnessed. Let her, as well as I, taste of the tortures which anticipate Hell ! "

" She already tastes them," said Ulrica, stepping before the couch of Front-de-Bœuf ; " she hath long drunken of this cup, and its bitterness is now sweetened to see that thou dost partake it."

" Vile, murderous hag ! " replied Front-de-Bœuf, " it is then thou who art come to exult over the ruins thou hast assisted to lay low ? "

" Ay, Reginald Front-de-Bœuf," answered she, " it is Ulrica—it is the daughter of the murdered Torquil Wolfganger. Thou hast been my evil angel, and I will be thine ; I will dog thee till the very instant of dissolution. The Saxon, Reginald,—the scorned Saxon assails thy walls !—Why liest thou here, like a worn-out hind, when the Saxon storms thy place of strength ? "

" Gods and fiends ! " exclaimed the wounded knight. " O, for one moment's strength, to drag myself to the *mêlée*, and perish as becomes my name ! "

" Think not of it, valiant warrior ! " replied she; " thou shalt die no soldier's death, but perish like the fox in his den. Thou shalt know even now the doom which all thy power, strength,

and courage is unable to avoid, though it is prepared for thee by this feeble hand. Markest thou the smouldering and suffocating vapour which already eddies in sable folds through the chamber ? Rememberest thou the magazine of fuel that is stored beneath these apartments ?

"Woman !" he exclaimed with fury, "thou hast not set fire to it ?—By Heaven, thou hast, and the castle is in flames !"

"They are fast rising at least," said Ulrica, with frightful composure ; "and a signal shall soon wave to warn the besiegers to press hard upon those who would extinguish them. Farewell, Front-de-Bœuf ! May the gods of the ancient Saxons—fiends, as the priests now call them—supply the place of comforters at your dying bed, which Ulrica now relinquishes ! But know, if it will give thee comfort to know it, that Ulrica is bound to the same dark coast with thyself, the companion of thy punishment as she was the companion of thy guilt."

So saying, she left the apartment ; and Front-de-Bœuf could hear the crash of the ponderous key as she locked and double-locked the door behind her. In the extremity of agony, he shouted upon his servants and allies—"Stephen and St. Maur ! Clement and Giles ! I burn here unaided ! To the rescue

—to the rescue, brave Bois-Guilbert, valiant De Bracy ! It is Front-de-Bœuf who calls ! It is your master, ye traitor squires! Your ally—your brother in arms—ye perjured and faithless knights! They hear me not—they cannot hear me—my voice is lost in the din of battle—The smoke rolls thicker and thicker—the fire has caught upon the floor below—O, for one draught of the air of heaven, were it to be purchased by instant annihilation !" And in the mad frenzy of despair, the wretch now shouted, now muttered curses on himself, on mankind, and on Heaven itself.

CHAPTER XXIX

Cedric, although not greatly confident in Ulrica's message, had not omitted to communicate her promise to the Black Knight and Locksley. They were well pleased to find they had a friend within the place, who might, in the moment of need, be able to facilitate their entrance.

When the barbican was carried, the Sable Knight sent notice of the happy event to Locksley, requesting him, at the same time, to keep

such a strict observation on the castle as might prevent the defenders from combining their force for a sudden sally, and recovering the outwork which they had lost.

The knight employed the interval in the fighting in causing to be constructed a sort of floating bridge, by means of which he hoped to cross the moat in despite of the resistance of the enemy. This was a work of some time, which the leaders the less regretted, as it gave Ulrica leisure to execute her plan of diversion in their favour, whatever that might be.

When the raft was completed, the Black Knight addressed the besiegers: "It avails not waiting here longer, my friends; the sun is descending in the west, and I have that upon my hands which will not permit me to tarry with you another day. One of us must go to Locksley, and bid him commence a discharge of arrows on the opposite side of the castle, and move forward as if to assault it; and you, true English hearts, stand by me, and be ready to thrust the raft endlong over the moat whenever the postern on our side is thrown open. Follow me boldly across, and aid me to burst yon sallyport in the main wall of the castle."

The portal, which led from the inner wall of the barbican to the moat was suddenly opened

and the temporary bridge was thrust forward. Well aware of the importance of taking the foe by surprise, the Black Knight, closely followed by Cedric, threw himself upon the bridge and reached the opposite side. Here he began to thunder with his axe upon the gate of the castle.

"Shame on ye all!" said De Bracy to the soldiers around him; "do ye call yourselves cross-bowmen, and let these two dogs keep their station under the walls of the castle? Heave over the coping stones from the battlement."

At this moment the besiegers caught sight of the red flag upon the angle of the tower which Ulrica had described to Cedric. The good yeoman Locksley was the first who was aware of it.

"St. George!" he cried—"Merry St. George for England! To the charge, bold yeomen! Why leave ye the good knight and the noble Cedric to storm the pass alone?—The castle is ours, we have friends within—See yonder flag, it is our appointed signal—Torquilstone is ours!"

With that he bent his good bow, and sent a shaft right through the breast of one of the men-at-arms, who, under De Bracy's direction, was loosening a fragment from one of the battlements

to precipitate on the heads of Cedric and the Black Knight.

De Bracy now snatched up the lever and assailed the loosened pinnacle which was of weight enough, if thrown down, to have destroyed the remnant of the drawbridge which sheltered the two foremost assailants. The massive pinnacle tottered, and De Bracy would have accomplished his task had not the voice of the Templar sounded close in his ear:

"All is lost, De Bracy; the castle burns."

"Thou art mad to say so!" replied the knight.

"It is all in a light flame on the western side," said the Templar, with the stern coolness which formed the basis of his character, "I have striven in vain to extinguish it. Lead thy men down as if to a sally; throw the postern gate open. There are but two men who occupy the float; fling them into the moat, and push across to the barbican. I will charge from the main gate, and attack the barbican on the outside; and if we can regain that post, be assured we shall defend ourselves until we are relieved, or at least till they grant us fair quarter."

"It is well thought upon," said De Bracy; "I will play my part."

He hastily drew his men together, and rushed down to the postern gate, which he caused

instantly to be thrown open. But scarce was this done ere the portentous strength of the Black Knight forced his way inward in despite of De Bracy and his followers. Two of the foremost instantly fell, and the rest gave way. "Dogs!" said De Bracy, "will ye let *two* men win our only pass for safety? The castle burns behind us, villains!—let despair give you courage, or let me forward! I will cope with this champion myself!"

The vaulted passages to which the postern gave entrance rang with the furious blows which the knights dealt each other, De Bracy with his sword, the Black Knight with his ponderous axe. At length the Norman received a blow which, though its force was partly parried by his shield, descended yet with such violence on his crest that he measured his length on the paved floor.

"Yield thee, De Bracy," said the Black Champion, stooping over him, "yield thee, Maurice De Bracy, rescue or no rescue, or thou art but a dead man."

"I will not yield," replied De Bracy, faintly, "to an unknown conqueror. It shall never be said that De Bracy was prisoner to a nameless churl."

The Black Knight whispered something into the ear of the vanquished.

"I yield me to be true prisoner, rescue or no rescue," answered the Norman, exchanging his tone of stern and determined obstinacy for one of deep though sullen submission.

"Go to the barbican," said the victor, in a tone of authority, "and there wait my further orders."

"Yet first let me say," said De Bracy, "what it imports thee to know. Wilfred of Ivanhoe is wounded and a prisoner, and will perish in the burning castle without present help."

"Wilfred of Ivanhoe!" exclaimed the Black Knight—"prisoner, and perish! The life of every man in the castle shall answer it, if a hair of his head be singed. Show me his chamber."

"Ascend yonder winding stair," said De Bracy; "it leads to his apartment. Wilt thou accept my guidance?" he added, in a submissive tone.

"No. To the barbican, and there wait my orders. I trust thee not, De Bracy."

During this combat and the brief conversation which ensued, Cedric, at the head of a body of men, had pushed across the bridge and driven back the dispirited and despairing followers of De Bracy. De Bracy himself arose from the ground, took off his helmet in token of submission, and,

going to the barbican, gave up his sword to Locksley.

As the fire augmented, symptoms of it became soon apparent in the chamber where Ivanhoe was watched and tended by Rebecca.

"The castle burns!" said Rebecca—"it burns! What can we do to save ourselves?"

"Fly, Rebecca, and save thine own life," said Ivanhoe, "for no human aid can avail me."

"I will not fly," answered Rebecca; "we will be saved or perish together. And yet, great God! my father—my father, what will be his fate?"

At this moment the door of the apartment flew open, and the Templar presented himself—a ghastly figure, for his gilded armour was broken and bloody, and the plume was partly shorn away, partly burnt from his casque. "I have found thee," said he to Rebecca; "thou shalt prove I will keep my word to share weal and woe with thee. There is but one path to safety. Up, and instantly follow me."

"Alone," answered Rebecca, "I will not follow thee. If thou hast but a touch of human charity in thee, save my aged father—save this wounded knight!"

"A knight," said the Templar, with his characteristic calmness, "a knight, Rebecca, must encounter his fate, whether it meet him in the shape of sword, or flame; and who recks how or where a Jew meets with his?"

So saying, he seized on the terrified maiden, who filled the air with her shrieks, and bore her out of the room without regarding the menace and defiance which Ivanhoe thundered against him.

"I had not found thee, Wilfred," said the Black Knight, who at that instant entered the apartment, "but for thy shouts."

"If thou be'st true knight," said Wilfred, "think not of me—pursue yon ravisher—save the Lady Rowena—look to the noble Cedric!"

"In their turn," answered he of the Fetterlock, "but thine is first."

And seizing upon Ivanhoe, he bore him off with as much ease as the Templar had carried off Rebecca, rushed with him to the postern, and having there delivered his burden to the care of two yeomen, he again entered the castle to assist in the rescue of the other prisoners.

One turret was now in bright flames, which flashed out furiously from window and shot-hole. But in other parts the great thickness of the

walls and the vaulted roofs of the apartments resisted the progress of the flames, and there the besiegers pursued the defenders of the castle from chamber to chamber, and satiated in their blood the vengeance which had long animated them against the soldiers of the tyrant Front-de-Bœuf. Most of the garrison resistsd to the uttermost ; a few of them asked quarter ; none received it. The air was filled with groans and clashing of arms; and the floors were slippery with the blood of expiring wretches.

Through the scene of confusion, Cedric rushed in quest of Rowena, the faithful Gurth following him closely through the *mêlée*. The noble Saxon was so fortunate as to reach his ward's apartment just as she had abandoned all hopes of safety. He committed her to the charge of Gurth, to be conducted in safety to the barbican. This accomplished, the loyal Cedric hastened in quest of his friend Athelstane. But ere he penetrated as far as the old hall in which he had himself been a prisoner, the inventive genius of Wamba had procured liberation for himself and his companion in adversity.

When the noise of the conflict announced that it was at the hottest, the Jester began to shout with the utmost power of his lungs. " St. George and the dragon ! Bonny St. George for

merry England ! The castle is won !" And these sounds he rendered yet more fearful by banging against each other two or three pieces of rusty armour which lay scattered around the hall.

A guard, which had been stationed in the outer or ante-room took fright at Wamba's clamour, and, leaving the door open behind them, ran to tell the Templar that foemen had entered the old hall. The prisoners found no difficulty in making their escape into the ante-room, and from thence into the court of the castle, which was now the last scene of contest. Here sat the fierce Templar, mounted on horse-back, surrounded by several of the garrison. The drawbridge had been lowered by his orders, but the passage was beset ; for the archers, who had hitherto only annoyed the castle on that side by their missiles, now thronged the entrance, to prevent the escape of the garrison and to secure their own share of booty.

Rebecca, placed on horseback before one of the Templar's Saracen slaves, was in the midst of the little party ; and Bois-Guilbert, notwith-standing the confusion of the bloody fray, showed every attention to her safety. Repeatedly he was by her side, and, neglecting his own defence, held before her the fence of his triangular steel-plated shield.

Athelstane, who, as the reader knows, was slothful, but not cowardly, beheld the female form the Templar protected thus sedulously, and doubted not that it was Rowena whom the knight was carrying off. To snatch a mace from the pavement, on which it lay beside one whose dying grasp had just relinquished it, to rush on the Templar's band, was for Athelstane's great strength but the work of a single moment; he was soon within two yards of Bois-Guilbert, whom he defied in his loudest tone.

"Turn, false-hearted Templar! Let go her whom thou art unworthy to touch; turn, limb of a band of murdering and hypocritical robbers!"

"Dog!" said the Templar, grinding his teeth, "I will teach thee to blaspheme the holy order of the Temple of Zion," and with these words, half-wheeling his steed, he discharged a fearful blow upon the head of Athelstane and levelled him with the earth.

Taking advantage of the dismay which was spread by the fall of Athelstane, and calling aloud, "Those who would save themselves, follow me!" the Templar now pushed across the drawbridge and galloped off with his followers.

The fire was now spreading rapidly through all parts of the castle, when Ulrica, who had first kindled it, appeared on a turret, in the guise of

one of the ancient furies, yelling forth a war-song. Her long dishevelled grey hair flew back from her uncovered head, and she brandished the distaff which she held in her hand, as if she had been one of the Fatal Sisters who spin and abridge the thread of human life.

The towering flames had now surmounted every obstruction. Tower after tower crashed down, with blazing roof and rafter. The maniac figure of Ulrica was for a long time visible on the lofty stand she had chosen, tossing her arms abroad with wild exultation, as if she reigned empress of the conflagration which she had raised. At length, with a terrific crash, the whole turret gave way, and she perished in the flames which had consumed her tyrant.

CHAPTER XXX

When daylight dawned upon the glades of the oak trees, the outlaws were all assembled around the trysting tree in the Hart-hill Walk, where they had spent the night in refreshing themselves after the fatigue of the siege. The

place of rendezvous was an aged oak. Here Locksley assumed his seat—a throne of turf erected under the twisted branches of the huge oak,—and his silvan followers were gathered around him. He assigned to the Black Knight a seat on his right hand, and to Cedric a place upon his left.

"Now, sirs," he said, "when this bold deed shall be sounded abroad, the bands of De Bracy, of Malvoisin, and other allies of Front-de-Bœuf, will be in motion against us, and it were well for our safety that we retreated from the vicinity. Noble Cedric," he said, turning to the Saxon, "the spoil is divided into two portions; do thou make choice of what best suits thee, to recompense thy people who were partakers with us in this adventure."

"Good yeoman," said Cedric, "my heart is oppressed with sadness. The noble Athelstane of Coningsburgh is no more. Hopes have perished with him which can never return! My people do but tarry my presence to transport his honoured remains to their last mansion. The Lady Rowena is desirous to return to Rotherwood, and must be escorted by a sufficient force. I should ere now have left this place, but I waited, not to share the booty, for so help me God and St. Withold, as neither I nor any of mine will

touch the value of a liard,—I waited but to render my thanks to thee and to thy bold yeomen, for the life and honour you have saved. And thou, my poor knave," continued Cedric, turning about and embracing the Jester, "how shall I reward thee, who feared not to give thy body to chains and death instead of mine?"—and a tear stood in the eye of the rough thane as he spoke.

"Nay," said the Jester, extricating himself from his master's caress, "if you pay my service with the water of your eyes, the Jester must weep for company, and then what becomes of his vocation? But, uncle, if you would indeed pleasure me, I pray you to pardon my playfellow, Gurth, who stole a week from your service to bestow it on your son."

"Pardon him!" exclaimed Cedric; "I will both pardon and reward him. Kneel down, Gurth." The swineherd was in an instant at his master's feet. "Thrall and bondsman art thou no longer," said Cedric, touching him with a wand. "A lawful freeman art thou in town and from town, in the forest as in the field. A hide of land I give to thee from me and mine to thee and thine aye and for ever."

No longer a serf but a freeman and a landholder, Gurth sprang upon his feet, and

twice bounded aloft to almost his own height from the ground.

"A smith and a file," he cried, "to do away the collar from the neck of a freeman! Noble master! doubled is my strength by your gift, and doubly will I fight for you!"

The tramp of horses was now heard, and the Lady Rowena appeared, surrounded by several riders. As she bent her steed towards Locksley's seat, that bold yeoman with all his followers, rose to receive her, as if by a general instinct of courage. The blood rose to her cheek as, courteously waving her hand, and bending so low that her beautiful and loose tresses were for an instant mixed with the flowing mane of her palfrey, she expressed in few but apt words her obligations and her gratitude to Locksley and her other deliverers.

"Thanks, gentle lady," said Locksley—"thanks from my company and myself. But to have saved you requites itself. We who walk the greenwood do many a wild deed, and the Lady Rowena's deliverance may be received as an atonement."

Cedric, ere they departed, expressed his peculiar gratitude to the Black Champion, and earnestly entreated him to accompany him to Rotherwood.

"War is a changeful mistress," he said, "and a home is sometimes desirable even to the champion whose trade is wandering. Thou hast earned one in the halls of Rotherwood, noble knight. Cedric has wealth enough to repair the injuries of fortune, and all he has is his deliverer's."

"Cedric has already made me rich," said the Knight; "he has taught me the value of Saxon virtue. To Rotherwood will I come, brave Saxon, and that speedily; but now pressing matters of moment detain me from your halls. Peradventure, when I come hither, I will ask such a boon as will put even thy generosity to the test."

"It is granted ere spoken out," said Cedric, striking his ready hand into the gauntleted palm of the Black Knight and bidding him farewell.

Rowena waved a graceful adieu to him, and Cedric and his party moved on through a glade in the forest.

"Valiant knight," said Locksley to the Black Champion, "without whose good heart and mighty arm our enterprise must altogether have failed, will it please you to take from that mass of spoil whatever may best serve to pleasure you, and to remind you of this my trysting tree?"

"I accept the offer," said the knight, "as frankly as it is given; and I ask permission to dispose of Sir Maurice De Bracy at my own pleasure."

"He is thine already," said Locksley, and well for him! Else the tyrant had graced the highest bough of this oak."

"De Bracy," said the Knight, "thou art free—depart. He whose prisoner thou art scorns to take mean revenge for what is past. But beware of the future, lest a worse thing befall thee. Maurice De Bracy, I say BEWARE!"

De Bracy bowed low and in silence; he caught a horse by the rein, for several which had been taken in the stables of Front-De-Bœuf stood accoutred around, and were a valuable part of the booty. He threw himself upon the saddle, and galloped off through the wood.

The chief outlaw now took from his neck the rich horn and baldric which he had recently gained at the strife of archery near Ashby.

"Noble knight," he said to the Black Knight, "if you disdain not to grace by your acceptance a bugle which an English yeoman has once worn, this will I pray you to keep as a memorial of your gallant bearing; and if ye have aught to do, and, as happeneth oft to a gallant knight, ye chance to be hard bested in any forest between Trent and

Tees, wind three notes upon the horn thus, *Wa-sa-hoa !* and it may well chance ye shall find helpers and rescue." He then gave breath to the bugle, and winded once and again the call which he described, until the knight had caught the notes.

Locksley now proceeded to the distribution of the spoil, which he performed with the most laudable impartiality. A tenth part of the whole was set apart for the church and for pious uses ; a portion was next allotted to a sort of public treasury ; a part was assigned to the widows and children of those who had fallen, or to be expended in masses for the souls of such as had left no surviving family. The rest was divided amongst the outlaws, according to their rank and merit.

When each had taken his own proportion of the booty, the portion devoted to the church still remained unappropriated.

" I would," said the leader, " we could hear tidings of our joyous chaplain. I have a holy brother of his a prisoner at no great distance, and I would fain have the Friar to help me to deal with him in due sort. I greatly misdoubt the safety of the bluff priest."

"I were right sorry for that," said the Black Knight, " for I stand indebted to him for the joyous hospitality of a merry night in his cell."

While they thus spoke, a loud shout among the yeomen announced the arrival of him for whom they feared.

"Make room, my merry men!" he exclaimed, "room for your godly father and his prisoner. I come, noble leader, like an eagle with my prey in my clutch." And making his way through the ring, amidst the laughter of all around, he appeared in majestic triumph, his huge partisan in one hand, and in the other a halter, one end of which was fastened to the neck of the unfortunate Isaac of York.

"Let us hear," said Locksley, "where you found this prisoner of thine."

"By St. Dunstan," said the Friar, "I found him where I sought for better ware! I did step into the cellarage to see what might be rescued there; and I had caught up one runlet of sack, and was coming to call more aid among these lazy knaves, when I was advised of a strong door. In I went, and found this dog of a Jew, who presently rendered himself my prisoner, rescue or no rescue."

"And now Jew," said the captain, "think of thy ransom—think, of an offer, while I examine a prisoner of another cast."

"Were many of Front-de-Bœuf's men taken?" demanded the Black Knight.

" None of note enough to be put to ransom," answered the captain. " The prisoner I speak of is better booty. Here cometh he, the worthy prelate, as pert as a pyet." And between two yeomen was brought before the silvan throne of the outlaw chief, Prior Aymer of Jorvaulx.

CHAPTER XXXI

The captive Abbot's features and manners exhibited a whimsical mixture of offended pride, and deranged foppery, and bodily terror.

" You must pay a round ransom, Sir Prior," said Locksley, " or your convent is likely to be called to a new election ; for your place will know you no more."

" Are ye Christians," said the Prior, " and hold this language to a churchman ? "

" Were it not well," said the lieutenant of the gang apart to Locksley, " that the Prior should name the Jew's ransom, and the Jew name the Prior's ? "

" Thou art a mad knave," said the captain, " but thy plan transcends ! Here, Jew, step

forth. Look at the holy Father Aymer, Prior of the rich Abbey of Jorvaulx, and tell us at what ransom we should hold him ? Thou knowest the income of his convent, I warrant thee."

" O, assuredly," said Isaac ; " six hundred crowns the good Prior might well pay to your honoured valours, and never sit less soft in his stall."

" Six hundred crowns," said the leader gravely ; " I am contented—thou hast well spoken, Isaac—six hundred crowns. It is a sentence, Sir Prior."

" A sentence!—a sentence ! " exclaimed the band ; " Solomon had not done it better."

" Ye are mad, my masters," said the Prior ; " where am I to find such a sum ? "

" If it so please you, " said Isaac, willing to curry favour with the outlaws, " I can send to York for the six hundred crowns, if so be that the most reverend Prior present will grant me a quittance."

" He shall grant thee whatever thou dost list, Isaac," said the captain ; " and thou shalt lay down the redemption money for Prior Aymer as well as for thyself."

" For myself ! ah, courageous sirs," said the Jew, " I am a broken and impoverished man ; a beggar's staff must be my portion through life, supposing I were to pay you fifty crowns."

"The Prior shall judge of that matter," replied the captain. "How say you, Father Aymer? Can the Jew afford a good ransom?"

"*Can* he afford a ransom?" answered the Prior. "Is he not Isaac of York? His house at York is so full of gold and silver as is a shame in any Christian land."

"Prior," said the captain, "do thou name his ransom, as he named thine."

"Since ye require me to put a price upon this caitiff," said the Prior, "I tell you openly that you will wrong yourselves if you take from him a penny under a thousand crowns."

"A sentence!—a sentence!" said the chief outlaw.

"A sentence!—a sentence!" shouted his assessors; "the Christian has shown his good nurture, and dealt with us more generously than the Jew."

"The God of my fathers help me!" said the Jew; "will ye bear to the ground an impoverished creature? I am this day childless, and will ye deprive me of the means of livelihood?—O Rebecca! daughter of my beloved Rachel! were each leaf on that tree a zecchin, and each zecchin mine own, all that mass of wealth would I give to know whether thou art

alive and hast escaped the hands of a Nazarene ! ''

" Was not thy daughter dark-haired ? '' said one of the outlaws ; " and wore not she a veil of twisted sandal, broidered with silver ? ''

" She did !—she did ! '' said the old man, trembling with eagerness as formerly with fear. " The blessing of Jacob be upon thee ! Canst thou tell me aught of her safety ? ''

" It was she, then,'' said the yeoman, " who was carried off by the proud Templar, when he broke through our ranks. I had drawn my bow to send a shaft after him, but spared him even for the sake of the damsel, who I feared might take harm from the arrow.''

" Oh ! '' answered the Jew, " I would to God thou hast shot, though the arrow had pierced her bosom ! Better the tomb of her fathers than the dishonourable couch of the licentious and savage Templar.''

" Friends,'' said the chief, looking round, " the old man is but a Jew, natheless his grief touches me—Well,'' continued he, turning to the Jew, " we will take thee at the same ransom with Prior Aymer, or rather at one hundred crowns lower, which hundred crowns shall be mine own peculiar loss ; and so we shall avoid

the heinous offence of rating a Jew merchant as high as a Christian prelate, and thou wilt have five hundred crowns remaining to treat for thy daughter's ransom—Hasten to make thy crowns clink to the ear of De Bois-Guilbert ere worse comes of it. Thou wilt find him, as our scouts have brought notice, at the next preceptory house of his Order."

Isaac, relieved of one half of his apprehensions, by learning that his daughter lived and might possibly be ransomed, threw himself at the feet of the generous outlaw.

"Prior Aymer," said the outlaw, "come apart with me under this tree. I have never heard that thou didst love oppression or cruelty. And Isaac will give thee a bag containing one hundred marks of silver, if thy intercession with thine ally the Templar shall avail to procure the freedom of his daughter."

"And what pledge am I to have for all this?" said the Prior.

"When Isaac returns successful through your mediation," said the outlaw, "I swear by St. Hubert, I will see that he pays thee the money in good silver."

The Prior sat down, and at great leisure indited an epistle to Brian de Bois-Guilbert, and having carefully sealed up the tablets, delivered

them to the Jew, saying, " This will be thy safe-conduct to the preceptory of Templestowe, and, I think, is most likely to accomplish the delivery of thy daughter, if it be well backed with proffers of advantage and commodity at thine own hand."

" Well, Prior," said the outlaw, " I will detain thee no longer here than to give the Jew acquittance for the six hundred crowns at which thy ransom is fixed."

With a much worse grace than that wherewith he had penned the letter to Bois-Guilbert, the Prior wrote an acquittance, discharging Isaac of York of six hundred crowns, advanced to him in his need for acquittal of his ransom, and faithfully promising to hold true compt with him for that sum.

It remained that the Jew should produce some security for the ransom which he was to pay on the Prior's account, as well as upon his own. He gave, accordingly, an order sealed with his signet, to a brother of his tribe at York, requiring him to pay to the bearer the sum of a thousand crowns, and to deliver certain merchandises specified in the note.

Ere Isaac departed, the outlaw chief bestowed on him this parting advice : " Be liberal of thine offers, Isaac, and spare not thy purse for thy daughter's safety. Credit me, that the gold thou

shalt spare in her cause will hereafter give thee as much agony as if it were poured molten down thy throat."

Isaac acquiesced with a deep groan, and set forth on his journey, accompanied by two tall foresters, who were to be his guides, and at the same time his guards, through the wood.

The Black Knight, who had seen with no small interest these various proceedings, now took his leave of the outlaw in turn ; nor could he avoid expressing his surprise at having witnessed so much civil policy amongst persons cast out from all ordinary protection and influence of the laws.

CHAPTER XXXII

On the morning after the fall of Torquilstone, a confused report began to spread abroad in the city of York that De Bracy and Bois-Guilbert, with their confederate, Front-de-Bœuf, had been taken or slain. Waldemar brought the rumour to Prince John, announcing, that he feared its truth the more that they had set out with a small attendance, for the purpose of committing

an assault on the Saxon Cedric and his attendants.

"What is to be done, Waldemar?" said the prince.

"I know nothing which can be done," answered his counsellor, "save that which I have already taken order for. I have ordered Louis Winkelbrand, De Bracy's lieutenant, to cause his trumpet sound to horse, and to display his banner, and to set presently forth towards the castle of Front-de-Bœuf, to do what yet may be done for the succour of our friends."

"But whom have we here?" exclaimed the prince "—De Bracy himself, by the rood! And in strange guise doth he come before us!"

It was indeed De Bracy. His armour was broken, defaced, and stained with blood in many places, and covered with clay and dust from the crest to the spur.

"De Bracy, what means this? Speak, I charge thee! Are the Saxons in rebellion? Where is the Templar?"

"The Templar is fled," said De Bracy; "Front-de-Bœuf you will never see more. He has found a red grave among the blazing rafters of his own castle, and I alone am escaped to tell you."

"Cold news," said Waldemar, "to us, though you speak of fire and conflagration."

"The worst news is not yet said," answered De Bracy; and, coming up to Prince John, he uttered in a low and emphatic tone—"Richard is in England; I have seen and spoken with him."

Prince John turned pale, tottered, and caught at the back of an oaken bench to support himself, much like to a man who receives an arrow in his bosom.

"Thou ravest, De Bracy," said Fitzurse, "it cannot be."

"It is as true as truth itself," said De Bracy. "I was his prisoner, and spoke with him."

"With Richard Plantagenet, sayest thou?" continued Fitzurse.

"With Richard Plantagenet," replied De Bracy,—"with Richard Cœur-de-Lion—with Richard of England."

"And thou wert his prisoner?" said Waldemar; "he is then at the head of a power?"

"No; only a few outlawed yeomen were around him, and to these his person is unknown. I heard him say he was about to depart from them. He joined them only to assist at the storming of Torquilstone."

"There is but one road to safety," said the Prince, and his brow grew black as midnight.

" This object of our terror journeys alone ; he must be met withal."

" Not by me," said De Bracy hastily ; " I was his prisoner, and he took me to mercy. I will not harm a feather in his crest."

" Who spoke of harming him ? " said Prince John, with a hardened laugh. " The knave will say next that I meant he should slay him ? No—a prison were better."

" Prison or tomb," said De Bracy, " I wash my hands of the whole matter."

" Villain ! " said Prince John, " thou wouldst not bewray our counsel ? "

" Counsel was never bewrayed by me," said De Bracy haughtily, " nor must the name of villain be coupled with mine ! I tell you that he gave me my life. True, he sent me from his presence, and refused my homage ; so far I owe him neither favour nor allegiance ; but I will not lift hand against him."

" Since it may not better be," said Waldemar Fitzurse ; " I will take on me the conduct of this perilous enterprise. Adieu, my Prince, till better times." Thus speaking, he left the apartment.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Mounted upon a mule, the gift of the outlaw, with two tall yeomen to act as his guard and guides, the Jew had set out for the preceptory of Templestowe, for the purpose of negotiating his daughter's redemption. The preceptory was but a day's journey from the demolished castle of Torquilstone, and the Jew had hoped to reach it before nightfall. But his strength failed him totally ere he had reached within four miles of the Temple court, and he was rendered altogether incapable of proceeding further than a small market town, where dwelt a Jewish rabbi of his tribe, eminent in the medical profession, to whom Isaac was well known. Nathan bon Israel received his suffering countryman with that kindness which the Jews practised to each other. He insisted on his betaking himself to repose, and used such remedies as were then in most repute to check the progress of the fever which terror, fatigue, ill-usage, and sorrow had brought upon the poor old Jew.

On the morrow, when Isaac proposed to arise and pursue his journey, Nathan remonstrated against his purpose, both as his host and as his physician. "It might cost him," he said, "his

life." But Isaac replied that more than life and death depended upon his going that morning to Templestowe.

"To Templestowe!" said his host with surprise; "Knowest thou that Lucas de Beaumanoir, the chief of their order, and whom they term Grand Master, is now himself at Templestowe? He hath come to England, unexpected by his brethren; and he cometh among them with a strong and outstretched arm to correct and punish. His countenance is kindled in anger against those who have departed from the vow which they have made, and great is the fear of those sons of Belial. Specially hath this proud man extended his glove over the children of Judah, holding the murder of a Jew to be an offering of as sweet savour as the death of a Saracen."

"Nevertheless," said Isaac, "I must present myself at Templestowe though he hath made his face like unto a fiery furnace seven times heated." He bade his friend farewell, and, after an hour's riding, arrived at the preceptory.

The Grand Master was at that time walking in a small garden and holding confidential communication with Conrade, a brother of his Order, who had come in his company from Palestine.

A squire entered, and bowing profoundly before the Grand Master, said, "A Jew stands without the gate, noble and reverend father, who prays to speak with brother Brian De Bois-Guilbert."

"Lead him to our presence," said the Grand Master.

The squire departed with a profound reverence, and in a few minutes returned, marshalling in Isaac of York.

"Damian," said the Grand Master, "retire, and have a guard ready to await our sudden call; and suffer no one to enter the garden until we shall leave it." The squire bowed and retreated. "Jew," continued the Grand Master, "mark me. What is thy business with our brother Brian de Bois-Guilbert?"

Isaac gasped with horror and uncertainty. To tell his tale might be interpreted into scandalising the Order; yet, unless he told it what hope could he have of achieving his daughter's deliverance? Beaumanoir saw his mortal apprehension, and condescended to give him some assurance.

"Fear nothing," he said, "for thy wretched person, Jew, so thou dealest uprightly in this matter. I demand again to know from thee thy business with Brian de Bois-Guilbert?"

"I am bearer of a letter," stammered out the Jew, "so please your reverend valour, to that good knight from Prior Aymer of the Abbey of Jorvaulx."

"Conrade, take thou the letter from the Jew, and give it to me," said the Grand Master; and, possessed of it, he perused it in haste, with an expression of surprise and horror; read it over again, more slowly; then holding it out to Conrade with one hand, and slightly striking it with the other, exclaimed—"Here is goodly stuff for one Christian man to write to another!"

Conrade took the letter from his superior. "Read it aloud, Conrade," said the Grand Master; "and do thou" (to Isaac) "attend to the purport of it, for we will question thee concerning it."

Conrade read the letter, which was in these words:

"Aymer, by divine grace, prior of the Cistercian house of St. Mary's of Jorvaulx, to Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert wisheth health, with the bounties of King Bacchus and of our Lady Venus. Touching our present condition, dear brother, we are a captive in the hands of certain lawless and godless men; we have learned of Front-de-Bœuf's misfortune, and that thou hast escaped with that fair Jewish sorceress whose black eyes have bewitched thee. We

are heartily rejoiced of thy safety; nevertheless, we pray thee to be on thy guard; for we are privately assured that your Grand Master comes from Normandy to diminish your mirth and amend your misdoings. The wealthy Jew her father, Isaac of York, having prayed of me letters in his behalf, I give him these, earnestly advising, and in a sort entreating, that you do hold the damsel to ransom.

"Given from this den of thieves, about the hour of matins.

"Aymer Pr. S. M. Jorvolciencis."

"Thy daughter, then," said the Grand Master, "is prisoner with Brian de Bois-Guilbert?"

"Ay, reverend valorous sir," stammered poor Isaac, "and whatsoever ransom a poor man may pay for her deliverance—"

"Peace!" said the Grand Master. "This thy daughter hath practised the art of healing, hath she not?"

"Ay, gracious sir," answered the Jew, with more confidence.

"Thy daughter worketh the cures, I doubt not," said the Grand Master, "by cabalistical mysteries."

"Nay, reverend and brave knight," answered Isaac, "but in chief measure by a balsam of marvellous virtue."

"Where had she that secret?" said Beaumanoir.

"It was delivered to her," answered Isaac reluctantly, "by Miriam, a sage matron of our tribe!"

"Ah, false Jew!" said the Grand Master, "was it not from that same witch Miriam, the abomination of whose enchantments has been heard of throughout every Christian land?" exclaimed the Grand Master, crossing himself. "Her body was burnt at a stake, and her ashes were scattered to the four winds; and so be it with me and mine Order, if I do not as much to her pupil, and more also! I will teach her to throw spell and incantation over the soldiers of the blessed Temple!—There, Damian, spurn this Jew from the gate; shoot him dead if he oppose or turn again—With his daughter we will deal as the Christian law and our own high office warrant."

Poor Isaac was hurried off accordingly, and expelled from the preceptory, all his entreaties, and even his offers, unheard and disregarded. Meanwhile, the Grand Master ordered to his presence the Preceptor of Templestowe.

CHAPTER XXXIV

When Albert Malvoisin, President, or, in the language of the Order, Preceptor of the establishment of Templestowe, appeared before the Grand Master, he was regarded with unwonted sternness.

"There is in this mansion, dedicated to the purposes of the Holy Order of the Temple," said the Grand Master in a severe tone, "a Jewish woman, brought hither by a brother of religion, by your connivance, Sir Preceptor?"

Albert Malvoisin was overwhelmed with confusion. He read in the looks of Beaumanoir ruin to Bois-Guilbert and to himself, unless he should be able to avert the impending storm.

"Why art thou mute?" continued the Grand Master. "How comes it, I demand of thee once more, that thou hast suffered a brother to bring a paramour, and that paramour a Jewish sorceress, into this holy place, to the stain and pollution thereof?"

"A Jewish sorceress!" echoed Albert Malvoisin; "good angels guard us! Your wisdom, reverend father, hath rolled away the darkness from my understanding. Much did I wonder that so good a knight as Brian de Bois-Guilbert seemed so fondly besotted on the charms

of this female, whom I received into this house merely to place a bar betwixt their growing intimacy. But since your reverend wisdom hath discovered this Jewish quean to be a sorceress, perchance it may account fully for his enamoured folly."

"It doth!—it doth!" said Beaumanoir; "Our brother Brian does in this matter deserve rather pity than severe chastisement. But concerning the foul witch who hath flung her enchantments over a brother of the Holy Temple, assuredly she shall die the death. Prepare the castle-hall for her trial."

Albert Malvoisin bowed and retired, to give directions for preparing the hall, and to seek out Brian de Bois-Guilbert, in order to communicate to him how matters were like to terminate.

It was not long ere he found him.

"Are these your precautions, Malvoisin?" said Bois-Guilbert reproachfully. "Hast thou suffered the dotard to learn that Rebecca is in the preceptory?"

"I neglected nothing," said the Preceptor, "that could keep secret your mystery. But I have turned the matter as I could; you are safe, if you renounce Rebecca. You are pitied—the victim of magical delusion. She is a sorceress, and must suffer as such."

"She shall not, by Heaven!" said Bois-Guilbert.

"By Heaven, she must and will. Neither you nor any one else can save her. For the present we part, nor must we be seen to hold close conversation—I must order the hall for his judgment-seat."

"Rebecca," said Bois-Guilbert, when he was left alone, "thou art likely to cost me dear. One effort will I make to save thee—but beware of ingratitude! For if I am again repulsed, my vengeance shall equal my love."

The Preceptor had hardly given the necessary orders, when he was joined by Conrade.

"It is surely a dream," said the Preceptor; "we have many Jewish physicians, and we call them not wizards though they work wonderful cures."

"The Grand Master thinks otherwise," said Conrade; "and, wizard or not, it were better that this miserable damsel die than that Brian de Bois-Guilbert should be lost to the Order."

"But," said Malvoisin, "are there grounds enough to condemn this Rebecca for sorcery? Will not the Grand Master change his mind when he sees that the proofs are so weak?"

"They must be strengthened, Albert," replied

Conrade—" they must be strengthened. Dost thou understand me ? "

" I do," said the Preceptor, " nor do I scruple to do aught for advancement of the Order ; but there is little time to find engines fitting."

" Malvoisin, they *must* be found," said Conrade. "And hark thee, if a byzant or two will sharpen their memory, let them not be wanting."

The ponderous castle-bell had tolled the point of noon, when the door of the chamber where Rebecca was confined, was unlocked, and Conrade and Malvoisin entered, attended by four warders clothed in black.

" Daughter of an accursed race ! " said the Preceptor, " arise and follow me."

" Whither," said Rebecca, " and for what purpose ? "

" Damsel," answererd Conrade, " it is not for thee to question, but to obey. Nevertheless, be it known to thee, that thou art to be brought before the tribunal of the Grand Master, of our Holy Order; there to answer for thine offences."

" May the God of Abraham be praised ! " said Rebecca, folding her hands devoutly ; " the name of a judge, though an enemy to my people, is to me as the name of a protector. Most willingly

do I follow thee; permit me only to wrap my veil around my head."

They descended the stair with slow and solemn step, traversed a long gallery, and entered the great hall in which the Grand Master had for the time established his court of justice. As she passed through the crowd, her arms folded and her head depressed, a scrap of paper was thrust into her hand, which she received almost unconsciously, and continued to hold without examining its contents. The assurance that she possessed some friend in this awful assembly gave her courage to look around, and to mark into whose presence she had been conducted.

CHAPTER XXXV

The tribunal erected for the trial occupied the dais or elevated part of the upper end of the great hall. On an elevated seat, directly before the accused, sat the Grand Master of the Temple. The preceptors of whom there were four present, occupied seats lower in height, and the knights who enjoyed no such rank in the Order were placed on benches still lower.

The whole assembly wore an aspect of the most profound gravity: A psalm commenced the proceedings of the day. When the sounds ceased, the Grand Master glanced his eye slowly around the circle. He then raised his voice and addressed the assembly.

"Reverend and valiant men, Knights, Preceptors, and Companions of this Holy Order, my brethren and my children! We have summoned to our presence a Jewish woman, by name Rebecca, daughter of Isaac of York—a woman infamous for witcheries; whereby she hath maddened the blood, and besotted the brain of a knight devoted to the service of the Holy Temple. Our brother, Brian de Bois-Guilbert, is well known as a true and zealous champion of the Cross.

"If we were told that such a man, suddenly casting away regard for his character, his vows, his brethren and his prospects, had associated to himself a Jewish damsel, and was so besotted by his folly as to bring her even to one of our own preceptories, what should we say but that the noble knight was influenced by some wicked spell? We are then rather to lament than chastise his backsliding; and, imposing on him only such penance as may purify him from his iniquity, we are to turn the

full edge of our indignation upon the accursed instrument, which had so well-nigh occasioned his utter falling away. Stand forth, therefore, and bear witness, ye who have witnessed these unhappy doings, that we may judge of the sum and bearing thereof."

Several witnesses were called upon to prove the risks to which Bois-Guilbert exposed himself in endeavouring to save Rebecca from the blazing castle, and his neglect of his personal defence in attending to her safety. The devotion of the knight to Rebecca's defence was exaggerated beyond the bounds not only of discretion, but even of the most frantic excess of chivalrous zeal ; and his deference to what she said, even although her language was often severe and upbraiding, was painted as carried to an excess which, in a man of his haughty temper, seemed almost preternatural.

The Preceptor of Templestowe was then called on to describe the manner in which Bois-Guilbert and the Jewess arrived at the preceptory. His evidence was skilfully guarded. While he apparently studied to spare the feelings of Bois-Guilbert, he threw in, from time to time, such hints as seemed to infer that he laboured under some temporary alienation of mind.

"Now," said the Grand Master, "let those who have aught to witness of the former life and conversation of this Jewish woman stand forth before us."

There was a bustle in the lower part of the hall, and when the Grand Master inquired the reason, it was replied there was in the crowd a bedridden man, Higg, the son of Snell whom the prisoner had restored to the perfect use of his limbs by a miraculous balsam.

The poor peasant, a Saxon by birth, was dragged forward to the bar, terrified at the penal consequences which he might have incurred by the guilt of having been cured of the palsy by a Jewish damsel. Perfectly cured he certainly was not, for he supported himself forward on crutches to give evidence. Most unwilling was his testimony, and given with many tears; but he admitted that two years ago, when residing at York, he was suddenly afflicted with a sore disease, while labouring for Isaac the rich Jew, in his vocation of a joiner; that he had been unable to stir from his bed until the remedies applied by Rebecca's directions, had in some degree restored him to the use of his limbs. He said that she had given him a pot of precious ointment, and fumbling in his bosom with a trembling hand, he produced a small box, bearing some Hebrew

characters on the lid, which was, with most of the audience, a sure proof that the devil had stood apothecary.

The Grand Master now commanded Rebecca to unveil herself. Opening her lips for the first time, she replied patiently, but with dignity, that it was not the wont of the daughters of her people to uncover their faces when alone in an assembly of strangers. The guards were about to remove her veil in obedience to the command of the Grand Master, when she stood up and said, "Nay, but for the love of your own daughters—Alas," she said, recollecting herself, "ye have no daughters!—yet for the love of your sisters, and of female decency, let me not be thus handled in your presence. I will obey you," she added, with an expression of patient sorrow in her voice, "ye are elders among your people, and, at your command, I will show the features of an ill-fated maiden."

She withdrew her veil, and looked on them with a countenance in which bashfulness contended with dignity. Her exceeding beauty excited a murmur of surprise, and the younger knights told each other with their eyes, in silent correspondence, that Brian's best apology was in the power of her real charms, rather than of her imaginary witchcraft.

Evidence was next given by two witnesses that Rebecca was heard to mutter to herself in an unknown tongue—that she spoke at times to herself, and seemed to look upward for a reply—that she had rings impressed with cabalistical devices—that she had worked a cure upon a wounded man brought to the castle of Torquilstone by making certain signs upon the wound, so that within the quarter of an hour the dying man was walking upon the ramparts—that one of them had seen her perch herself upon the parapet of a turret and there take the form of a milk-white swan, under which appearance she flitted three times round the castle of Torquilstone.

This weighty evidence was gravely listened to as a proof that Rebecca had unlawful correspondence with mystical powers. The Grand Master now demanded of her in a solemn tone what she had to say against the sentence of condemnation which he was about to pronounce.

"To invoke your pity," said the lovely Jewess, with a voice tremulous with emotion, "would, I am aware, be as useless as I should hold it mean. To plead that many things which these men (whom may Heaven pardon!) have spoken against me are impossible, would avail me but little, since you believe in their

possibility. Nor will I even vindicate myself at the expense of my oppressor, who stands there listening to the fictions and surmises which seem to convert the tyrant into the victim. God be judge between him and me ! He is of your own faith, and his lightest affirmance would weigh down the most solemn protestations of the distressed Jewess. I will not therefore return to himself the charge brought against me—but to himself—yes, Brian de Bois-Guilbert, to thyself I appeal, whether these accusations are not false—as monstrous and calumnious as they are deadly ? ''

There was a pause ; all eyes turned to Brian de Bois-Guilbert. He was silent.

'' Speak,'' she said, '' if thou art a man—if thou art a Christian, speak ! I conjure thee, by the habit which thou dost wear—by the name thou dost inherit—by the knighthood thou dost vaunt, I conjure thee to say, are these things true ? ''

'' Answer her, brother,'' said the Grand Master, '' if the Enemy with whom thou dost wrestle will give thee power.''

In fact, Bois-Guilbert seemed agitated by contending passions, which almost convulsed his features, and it was with a constrained voice that at last he replied, looking to Rebecca—'' The scroll !—the scroll ! ''

"Ay," said Beaumanoir, "this is indeed testimony! The victim of her witcheries can only name the fatal scroll, the spell inscribed on which is, doubtless, the cause of his silence."

But Rebecca put another interpretation on words extorted as it were from Bois-Guilbert, and glancing her eye upon the slip of parchment which she continued to hold in her hand, she read written thereupon in the Arabic character, "Demand a champion!" The murmuring commentary which ran through the assembly at the strange reply of Bois-Guilbert gave Rebecca leisure to examine and instantly to destory the scroll unobserved. When the whisper had ceased, the Grand Master spoke.

"Rebecca, thou canst derive no benefit from the evidence of this unhappy knight, for whom, as we well perceive, the Enemy is yet too powerful. Hast thou aught else to say?"

"There is yet one chance of life left to me," said Rebecca, "even by your own fierce laws. Life has been miserable—miserable, at least, of late,—but I will not cast away the gift of God, while He affords me the means of defending it. I deny this charge—I maintain my innocence, and I declare the falsehood of this accusation. I challenge the privilege of trial by combat, and will appear by my champion."

"And who, Rebecca," replied the Grand Master, "will lay lance in rest for a sorceress? Who will be the champion of a Jewess?"

"God will raise me up a champion," said Rebecca. "It is enough I challenge the trial by combat; there lies my gage."

She took her embroidered glove from her hand, and flung it down before the Grand Master with an air of mingled simplicity and dignity which excited universal surprise and admiration.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Even Lucas Beaumanoir himself was affected by the mien and appearance of Rebecca.

"Brethren," said he, "though this woman is a Jewess and an unbeliever, she is also a stranger and defenceless, and God forbid that she should ask the benefit of our mild laws and that it should be refused to her. Thus, therefore, stands the case. Rebecca, the daughter of Isaac of York, is, by many frequent and suspicious circumstances, defamed of sorcery practised on the person of a noble knight of our Holy Order,

and hath challenged the combat in proof her innocence. To whom, reverend brethren, is it your opinion that we should deliver the gage of battle, naming him, at the same time, to be our champion on the field ? ''

'' To Brian de Bois-Guilbert, whom it chiefly concerns,'' said the preceptor of Goodalricke.

'' Thou sayest right, brother,'' said the Grand Master. '' Albert Malvoisin, give this gage of battle to Brian de Bois-Guilbert. It is our charge to thee, brother,'' he continued, addressing himself to Bois-Guilbert, '' that thou do thy battle manfully, nothing doubting that the good cause shall triumph. And do thou, Rebecca, attend, that we assign to thee the third day from the present to find a champion ; and if thou failest to do so, or if thy champion be discomfited by the judgment of God, thou shalt then die the death of a sorceress.''

Rebecca then modestly reminded the Grand Master that she ought to be permitted some opportunity of free communication with her friends, for the purpose of making her condition known to them.

'' It is just and lawful,'' said the Grand Master, '' choose what messenger thou shalt trust.''

"Is there," said Rebecca, "any one here who, either for love of a good cause or for ample hire, will do the errand of a distressed being?"

All were silent; for none thought it safe, in the presence of the Grand Master, to avow any interest in the calumniated prisoner, lest he should be suspected of leaning towards Judaism.

But Higg, the son of Snell, replied, "I am only a maimed man, but that I can at all stir or move was owing to her charitable assistance—I will do thine errand."

"Seek out Isaac of York," said Rebecca, "here is that will pay for horse and man—let him have this scroll—I know not if it be of Heaven the spirit which inspires me, but most truly do I judge that I am not to die this death, and that a champion will be raised up for me. Farewell!—Life and death are in thy haste."

Higg took the scroll, which contained only a few lines in Hebrew. As it fortuned, he had no occasion to go far, for within a quarter of a mile from the gate of the preceptory, he met with two riders, whom, by their dress and huge yellow caps, he knew to be Jews, and, on approaching more nearly, discovered that one of them was his old employer, Isaac of York. The other was the Rabbi

ben Samuel; and both had approached as near to the preceptory as they dared, on hearing that the Grand Master had summoned a chapter for the trial of a sorceress.

"What poor wretch comes hither upon his crutches, desiring, as I think, some speech of me?—How now, brother?" said ben Samuel, looking towards Isaac, who had but glanced at the scroll which Higg offered, when, uttering a deep groan, he fell from his mule like a dying man, and lay for a minute insensible.

The Rabbi now dismounted in great alarm, and hastily applied the remedies which his art suggested for the recovery of his companion.

"Child of my sorrow," said Isaac, when he regained his senses. "Why should thy death bring down my grey hairs to the grave, till, in the bitterness of my heart, I curse God and die!"

The physician took the scroll from Isaac and read, but in their native language, the following words:—

"My father, I am as one doomed to die for that which my soul knoweth not, even for the crime of witchcraft. My father, if a strong man can be found to do battle for my cause with sword and spear, according to the custom of the Nazarenes, and that within the lists of Templestowe, on the

third day from this time, peradventure our fathers' God will give him strength to defend the innocent, and her who hath none to help her. But if this may not be, let the virgins of our people mourn for me as for one cast off. One Nazarene warrior might indeed bear arms in my behalf, even Wilfred son of Cedric, whom the Gentiles call Ivanhoe. But he may not yet endure the weight of his armour. Nevertheless, send the tidings unto him, my father; for he hath favour among the strong men of his people, and as he was our companion in the house of bondage, he may find some one to do battle for my sake. And say unto him—even unto him—even unto Wilfred, the son of Cedric, that if Rebecca live, or if Rebecca die, she liveth or dieth wholly free of the guilt she is charged withal."

"Take courage," said the Rabbi, when he had finished reading, "for this grief availeth nothing. Gird up thy loins, and seek out this Wilfred, the son of Cedric."

"I will seek him out," said Isaac, "for he is a good youth, and hath compassion for the exile of Jacob."

They embraced and departed on their several roads.

CHAPTER XXXVII

It was in the twilight of the day when her trial, if it could be called such, had taken place, that a low knock was heard at the door of Rebecca's prison chamber.

"Enter," she said, "if thou art a friend; and if a foe, I have not the means of refusing thy entrance."

"I am," said Brian de Bois-Guilbert, entering the apartment, "friend or foe, Rebecca, as the event of this interview shall make me."

Alarmed at the sight of this man, Rebecca drew back into the farthest corner of the apartment.

"What is thy purpose, Sir Knight?" said she. "Speak it briefly—If thou hast aught to do, save to witness the misery thou hast caused, let me know it."

"I perceive, Rebecca," said Bois-Guilbert, "that thou dost continue to burden me with the charge of distresses which most fain would I have prevented."

"Sir Knight," said Rebecca, "I would avoid reproaches; but what is more certain than

that I owe my death to thine unbridled passion ?"

"You err—you err," said the Templar hastily. "That scroll which warned thee to demand a champion, from whom couldst thou think it came, if not from Bois-Guilbert ? In whom else couldst thou have excited such interest ?"

"A brief respite from instant death," said Rebecca, "which will little avail me. Was this all thou couldst do for one on whose head thou hast heaped sorrow, and whom thou hast brought near even to the verge of the tomb ?"

"No, maiden," said Bois-Guilbert, "this was not all that I purposed. Had it not been for the accursed interference of yon fanatical dotard, and the fool of Goodalrick, the office of the champion defender had devolved not on a preceptor, but on a companion of the order. Then I myself—such was my purpose—had, on the sounding of the trumpet, appeared in the lists as thy champion, disguised in the fashion of a roving knight ; and then, let Beaumanoir have chosen not one, but two or three of the brethren here assembled, I had not doubted to cast them out of the saddle with my single lance. Thus Rebecca should thine innocence have been avouched, and to thine own gratitude would I have trusted for the reward

of my victory—But thy friend and protector I may yet be; but mark at what risk, or rather at what certainty of dishonour."

"Speak," said Rebecca, "I understand thee not."

"Well then," said the knight, "I will speak freely. If I appear in the lists, I must maintain my name in arms: and then, championed or unchampioned, thou diest by the stake and faggot, for there lives not the knight who hath coped with me in arms on equal issue or on terms of vantage, save Richard Cœur-de-Lion and his minion of Ivanhoe. Ivanhoe, as thou well knowest, is unable to bear his corslet, and Richard is in a foreign prison. But if I appear not, then am I a degraded knight. I lose fame—I lose honour—I lose the prospect of such greatness as scarce emperors attain to. And yet, Rebecca, this greatness will I sacrifice, this power will I forego, if thou wilt say, 'Bois-Guilbert, I receive thee for my lover.'"

"Think not of such foolishness, Sir Knight," said Rebecca. "Farewell. I waste no more words on thee; the time that remains on earth to the daughter of Jacob must be otherwise spent—she must seek the Comforter, who ever opens His ear to the cry of those who seek Him in sincerity and in truth."

"We part then thus?" said the Templar, after a short pause; "would to Heaven we had never met! But thou forgivest me, Rebecca?"

"As freely as ever victim forgave her executioner."

"Farewell, then," said the Templar, and left the apartment.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

When the Black Knight left the trysting-tree of the generous outlaw, he held his way straight to a neighbouring religious house, the priory of St. Botolph, to which Ivanhoe had been removed when the castle was taken, under the guidance of Gurth and Wamba. Next morning the Black Knight took an affectionate farewell of Ivanhoe, and set forth on his journey, accompanied by Wamba, who attended as his guide. Ivanhoe followed them with his eyes until they were lost in the shades of the surrounding forest, and then returned into the convent.

But shortly after matin-song, he requested to see the prior. The old man came in haste, and inquired anxiously after the state of his health.

"It is better," he said, "than my fondest hope could have anticipated. I feel already as if I could bear my corslet; and so much the better, for thoughts pass in my mind which render me unwilling to remain here longer in inactivity."

"And what can have urged you to so sudden a departure?" said the prior.

"Have you never, holy father," answered Ivanhoe, "felt an apprehension of approaching evil, for which you in vain attempted to assign a reason?—I would crave thee the use of some palfrey whose pace may be softer than that of my war-horse."

"Surely," said the worthy churchman, "you shall have mine own ambling jennet."

"I pray you, reverend father," said Ivanhoe, "let her be got ready instantly, and bid Gurth attend me with mine arms."

When the jennet was led forth, Ivanhoe threw himself upon her, and commanding Gurth to keep close by his side, he followed the track of the Black Knight into the forest.

In the meantime, the Black Champion and

his guide were pacing at their leisure through the recesses of the forest.

At one point of their journey, Wamba struck into a carol, a sort of comic ditty, about 'a yeoman of Kent' successfully courting a widow.

"I would, Wamba," said the Knight, "that our host of the trysting-tree or the jolly friar, his chaplain, heard this ditty."

"So would not I," said Wamba—"but for the horn that hangs at your baldric."

"Ay," said the Knight, "this is a pledge of Locksley's good will, though I am not likely to need it. Three notes on this bugle will, I am assured, bring round, at our need, a jolly band of yonder honest yeomen."

"Nay, then," said Wamba, "I will pray you for a close sight of that same horn that hath so powerful a breath."

The Knight undid the clasp of the baldric, and indulged his fellow-traveller, who immediately hung the bugle round his own neck.

"And now that Folly wears the horn," said the Jester, "let Valour rouse himself and shake his mane; for, if I mistake not, there are company in yonder brake that are on the look-out for us."

"What makes thee judge so?" said the Knight.

"Because I have twice or thrice noticed the glance of a morrion from amongst the green leaves. Had they been honest men, they had kept the path."

"By my faith," said the Knight, closing his visor, "I think thou be'st in the right on't."

And in good time did he close it, for three arrows flew at the same instant from the suspected spot against his head and breast, one of which would have penetrated to the brain, had it not been turned aside by the steel visor. The other two were averted by the gorget, and by the shield which hung around his neck.

"Thanks, trusty armourer," said the Knight; "Wamba, let us close with them,"—and he rode straight to the thicket. He was met by six or seven men-at-arms, who ran against him with their lances at full career. The Black Knight's eyes seemed to flash fire even through the aperture of his visor. He raised himself in his stirrups with an air of inexpressible dignity, and exclaimed, "What means this, my masters!" The men made no other reply than by drawing their swords and attacking him on every side, crying, "Die, tyrant!"

"Ha! St. Edward! Ha! St. George!" said the Black Knight, striking down a man at every invocation, "have we traitors here?"

His opponents bore back from an arm which carried death in every blow; but a knight, in blue armour, who had hitherto kept himself behind the other assailants, spurred forward with his horse, and taking aim not at the rider but at the steed, wounded the noble animal mortally.

"That was a felon stroke!" exclaimed the Black Knight as the steed fell to the earth, bearing his rider along with him.

And at this moment Wamba winded the bugle, for the whole had passed so speedily that he had not time to do so earlier. The sudden sound made the murderers bear back once more, and Wamba, though imperfectly weaponed, did not hesitate to rush in and assist the Black Knight to rise.

"Shame on ye false cowards!" exclaimed he in the blue armour, who seemed to lead the assailants, "do ye fly from the empty blast of a horn blown by a jester?"

Animated by his words, they attacked the Black Knight anew, whose best refuge was now to place his back against an oak, and defend himself with his sword. The felon knight galloped against him in hopes to nail him with his lance against the tree, when his purpose was again intercepted by Wamba. The Jester effectually checked his fatal career by hamstringing his

horse with a stroke of his sword. Horse and man went to the ground. Yet the situation of the Knight of the Fetterlock continued very precarious, as he was pressed close by several men completely armed, when a grey-goose shaft suddenly stretched on the earth one of the most formidable of his assailants, and a band of yeomen broke forth from the glade, headed by Locksley and the jovial Friar, who soon disposed of the ruffians, all of whom lay on the spot dead or mortally wounded. The Black Knight thanked his deliverers with a dignity they had not observed in his former bearing, which hitherto had seemed rather that of a blunt, bold soldier than of a person of exalted rank.

"It concerns me much," he said, "even before I express my full gratitude to my ready friends, to discover, if I may, who have been my unprovoked enemies. Open the visor of that Blue Knight, Wamba, who seems the chief of these villains."

The Jester instantly made up to the leader of the assassins, and, with no very gentle hand, undid his helmet.

"Waldemar Fitzurse!" said the Black Knight in astonishment; "what could urge one of thy rank and seeming worth to so foul an

undertaking?—Stand back, my masters, I would speak to him alone—And now, Waldemar Fitzurse, tell me the truth—confess who set thee on this traitorous deed."

"Thy father's son," answered Waldemar.

Richard's eyes sparkled with indignation, but his better nature overcame it. He pressed his hand against his brow, and remained an instant gazing on the face of the humbled baron, in whose features pride was contending with shame.

"Thou dost not ask thy life, Waldemar?" said the King.

"He that is in the lion's clutch," answered Fitzurse, "knows it were useless."

"Take it, then, unasked," said Richard; "the lion preys not on prostrate carcasses. Take thy life, but with this condition, that in three days thou shalt leave England, and go to hide thine infamy in thy Norman castle, and that thou wilt never mention the name of John of Anjou as connected with thy felony. If thou art found on English ground after the space I have allotted thee, thou diest—Let this knight have a steed, Locksley, and let him depart unharmed."

"But that I judge I listen to a voice whose behests must not be disputed," answered the

yeoman, "I would send a shaft after the skulking villain that should spare him the labour of a long journey."

"Thou bearest an English heart, Locksley," said the Black Knight, "and well dost judge thou art the more bound to obey my behest—I am Richard of England!"

At these words, pronounced in a tone of majesty suited to the high rank, and no less distinguished character, of Cœur-de-Lion, the yeomen at once kneeled down before him, and at the same time tendered their allegiance, and implored pardon for their offences.

"Rise, my friends," said Richard in a gracious tone; "your misdemeanours, whether in forest or field, have been atoned by the loyal services you rendered my distressed subjects before the walls of Torquilstone, and the rescue you have this day afforded to your sovereign. Arise, my liegemen, and be good subjects in future—And thou, brave Locksley—"

"Call me no longer Locksley, my Liege, but know me under the name which, I fear, fame hath blown too widely not to have reached even your royal ears—I am Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest."

"King of outlaws, and Prince of good fellows!" said the King. "Who hath not heard a

name that has been borne as far as Palestine ? But be assured that no deed done in our absence, and in the turbulent times to which it hath given rise, shall be remembered to thy disadvantage."

Richard looked around, and beheld the jovial Friar on his knees, telling his rosary, while his quarter-staff, which had not been idle during the skirmish, lay on the grass beside him. His countenance was gathered so as he thought might best express the most profound contrition, his eyes being turned up, and the corners of his mouth drawn down.

"For what art thou cast down, mad priest ?" said Richard. "Art thou afraid thy diocesan should learn how truly thou dost serve Our Lady and St. Dunstan ? Tush, man ! Fear not. Richard of England betrays no secrets that pass over the flagon."

The hermit, well-known to the curious in penny histories of Robin Hood by the name of Friar Tuck, bowed profoundly and fell into the rear.

At the same time, two additional personages appeared on the scene.

CHAPTER XXXIX

The new-comers were Ivanhoe and Gurth. The astonishment of the former was beyond bounds when he saw his master besprinkled with blood, and six or seven dead bodies lying around. Nor was he less surprised to see Richard surrounded by so many outlaws, a perilous retinue for a prince. He hesitated whether to address the King as the Black Knight-errant, or in what other manner to demean himself towards him. Richard saw his embarrassment.

"Fear not, Wilfred," he said, "to address Richard Plantagenet as himself, since thou seest him in the company of true English hearts."

"Sir Wilfred of Ivanhoe," said the gallant outlaw, stepping forward, "my assurances can add nothing to those of our sovereign; yet, let me say, somewhat proudly, that he hath not truer subjects than those who now stand around him."

"I cannot doubt it, brave men," said Wilfred, "since thou art of the number. But what means these marks of death and danger—these slain men, and the bloody armour of my Prince?"

"Treason hath been with us, Ivanhoe," said the King; "but, thanks to these brave men, treason hath met its meed—But, now I bethink me, thou too art a traitor," said Richard, smiling; "a most disobedient traitor; for were not our orders positive that thou shouldst repose thyself at St. Botolph's until thy wound was healed?"

"It is healed," said Ivanhoe—"it is not of more consequence than the scratch of a bodkin. But why—oh why, noble Prince, will you thus expose your life by lonely journeys and rash adventures, as if it were of no more value than that of a mere knight-errant, who has no interest on earth but what lance and sword may procure him?

"Richard Plantagenet," said the King, "desires no more fame than his good lance and sword may acquire him—But come, sirs, let us merrily on to Coningsburgh."

CHAPTER XL

Attended by Ivanhoe, Gurth and Wamba, the King arrived within view of the Castle of

Coningsburgh, while the sun was yet in the horizon.

A huge black banner floated from the tower and announced that the obsequies of the late owner were still in the act of being solemnised. All around the castle was a scene of busy commotion; for such funeral banquets were times of general and profuse hospitality.

When Richard and Ivanhoe entered the castle-yard, the seneschal or steward of the castle in his sable dress and holding in his hand his white wand of office, made way through the miscellaneous assemblage of guests, and conducted the new-comers to the entrance of the tower.

By a difficult and complicated entrance, they were ushered into the round apartment which occupied the whole of the third story from the ground. Wilfred, by the difficulties of the ascent, gained time to muffle his face in his mantle, as it had been held expedient that he should not present himself to his father until the King should give him the signal.

There were assembled in this apartment, around a large oaken table, about a dozen of the most distinguished representatives of the Saxon families in the adjacent counties. Cedric seemed to act as chief of the assembly. Upon the entrance of Richard (only known to him as the

valorous Knight of the Fetterlock), he arose gravely and gave him welcome. The King returned the greeting and partook of a cup which was handed to him by the sewer. The same courtesy was offered to Ivanhoe, who pledged his father in silence.

Cedric then conducted Richard and his companion into a small and very rude chapel. Before the altar was placed a bier, and on each side of this bier kneeled three priests, who told their beads, and muttered their prayers, with the greatest signs of external devotion. Richard and Wilfred followed the example of their guide by devoutly crossing themselves, and muttering a brief prayer for the weal of the departed soul.

This act of pious charity performed, Cedric again motioned them to follow him, and, after ascending a few steps, opened with great caution the door of a small oratory, adjoining the chapel. A beam of the setting sun found its way into its dark recess, and showed a female of a dignified mien, whose countenance retained the marked remains of majestic beauty.

"Noble Edith," said Cedric, after having stood a moment silent, as if to give Richard and Wilfred time to look upon the lady of the mansion, "these are worthy strangers come to take a part in thy sorrows. And this, in especial,

is the valiant knight who fought so bravely for the deliverance of him for whom we this day mourn."

"His bravery has my thanks," returned the lady; "although it be the will of Heaven that it should be displayed in vain."

The guests bowed deeply to the mourning parent, and withdrew with their hospitable guide.

Cedric next conducted them into a small room destined, as he informed them, for the exclusive accommodation of honourable guests. He assured them of every accommodation, and was about to withdraw when the Black Knight took his hand.

"I crave to remind you, noble thane," he said, "that when we last parted you promised, for the service I had the fortune to render you, to grant me a boon."

"It is granted ere named, noble Knight," said Cedric; "yet, at this sad moment—"

"Of that also," said the King, "I have bethought me; but my time is brief; neither does it seem to me unfit that, when closing the grave on the noble Athelstane, we should deposit therein certain prejudices and hasty opinions."

"Sir Knight of the Fetterlock," said Cedric colouring, and interrupting the King in his turn, "I trust your boon regards yourself and no

other ; for in that which concerns the honour of my house, it is scarce fitting that a stranger should mingle."

"Nor do I wish to mingle," said the King mildly, "unless in so far as you will admit me to have an interest. As yet you have known me but as the Black Knight of the Fetterlock—Know me now as Richard Plantagenet."

"Richard of Anjou!" exclaimed Cedric, stepping backward with the utmost astonishment.

"No, noble Cedric—Richard of England! whose deepest interest—whose deepest wish is to see her sons united with each other. And now to my boon. I require of thee, as a man of thy word, on pain of being held faithless, man-sworn and infamous, to forgive and receive to thy paternal affection the good knight, Wilfred of Ivanhoe."

"And this is Wilfred!" said Cedric, pointing to his son.

"My father!—my father!" said Ivanhoe prostrating himself at Cedric's feet, "grant me thy forgiveness!"

"Thou hast it, my son," said Cedric raising him up. "The son of Hereward knows how to keep his word, even when it has been passed to a Norman—Thou art about to speak," he added sternly, "and I guess the topic. The Lady

Rowena must complete two years' mourning, as for a betrothed husband. The ghost of Athelstane himself would burst his bloody cerements, were we to treat of a new union for her ere the grave of him she would have wedded, is closed."

It seemed as if Cedric's words had raised a spectre; for scarce had he uttered them ere the door flew open, and Athelstane arrayed in the garments of the grave stood before them, pale, haggard, and like something arisen from the dead!

The effect of this apparition on the persons present was utterly appalling. Cedric started back as far as the wall of the apartment would permit, and leaned against it as if unable to support himself.

"In the name of God!" said Cedric, "if thou art mortal, speak! Living or dead, noble Athelstane, speak to Cedric!"

"I will," said the spectre, very composedly, "when I have collected breath, and when you give me time. Alive, saidst thou? I am as much alive as he can be, who has fed on bread and water for three days, which seem three ages."

"Why, noble Athelstane," said the Black Knight, "I myself saw you struck down by the

fierce Templar and thought your skull was cloven through the teeth."

"You thought amiss, Sir Knight," said Athelstane. "The Templar's sword turned in his hand, so that the blade struck me flatlings. But as it was, down I went, stunned indeed, but unwounded. I never recovered my senses until I found myself in a coffin—an open one, by good luck!—in a cell at the convent of St. Edmund."

The guests, agape with astonishment, listened to the story of his escape. He had now many more auditors than to whom it was commenced, for many, including Edith and Rowena, had followed the dead-alive up to the strangers' apartment.

"Never will dawn a morrow more auspicious" said Cedric, "than the next for the deliverance of the noble Saxon race."

"Talk not to me of delivering any one," said Athelstane; "it is well I am delivered myself."

"Think of the career of glory which lies open before thee," said Cedric. "Tell this Norman prince, Richard of Anjou, that lion-hearted as he is, he shall not hold undisputed the throne of Alfred, while a male descendant of the Holy Confessor lives to dispute it."

"How!" said Athelstane; "is this the noble King Richard?"

"It is Richard Plantagenet himself," said Cedric; "yet I need not remind thee that, coming hither a guest of free-will, he may neither be injured nor detained prisoner; thou well knowest thy duty to him as his host."

"Ay, by my faith!" said Athelstane; "and my duty as a subject besides, for I here tender him my allegiance, heart and hand."

"My son," said Edith, "think on thy royal rights!"

"Think on the freedom of England, degenerate prince!" said Cedric.

"Mother and friend," said Athelstane, "a truce to your upbraidings! Bread and water and a dungeon are marvellous mortifiers of ambition, and I rise from the tomb a wiser man than I descended into it."

"And my ward Rowena," said Cedric,—"I trust you intend not to desert her?"

"Father Cedric," said Athelstane, "be reasonable. The Lady Rowena cares not for me; she loves the little finger of my kinsman Wilfred's glove better than my whole person. There she stands to avouch it—Nay, blush not, kinswoman—Here, cousin Wilfred of Ivanhoe, in thy favour I renounce and abjure—Hey! by St. Dunstan, our

cousin Wilfred hath vanished! Yet, unless my eyes are still dazzled with the fasting I have undergone, I saw him stand there but even now."

All now looked around and inquired for Ivanhoe ; but he had vanished. It was at length discovered that a Jew had been to seek him ; and that, after very brief conference, he had called for Gurth and his armour, and had left the castle.

King Richard was gone also, and no one knew whither. At length it was learned that he had hastened to the court-yard, summoned to his presence the Jew who had spoken with Ivanhoe, and, after a moment's speech with him, had called vehemently to horse, thrown himself upon a steed, compelled the Jew to mount another, and set off at a rate which rendered the old Jew's neck not worth a penny's purchase.

CHAPTER XLI

It was a scene of bustle and life. The eyes of a very considerable multitude were bent on the gate of the preceptory of Templestowe,

while still greater numbers surrounded the tilt-yard belonging to that establishment.

This enclosure was formed on a piece of level ground. A throne was erected for the Grand Master at the east end, surrounded with seats of distinction for the preceptors and knights of the order. At the opposite end was a pile of faggots, so arranged around a stake, deeply fixed in the ground, as to leave a space for the victim to enter within the fatal circle, in order to be chained to the stake by the fetters which hung ready for the purpose.

At length the drawbridge fell, the gates opened, and a knight, bearing the great standard of the order, sallied from the castle, preceded by six trumpets, and followed by the knights preceptors, two and two, the Grand Master coming last, mounted on a stately horse. Behind him came Brian de Bois-Guilbert, armed *cap-à-pie* in bright armour, but without his lance, shield, and sword, which were borne by his two squires behind him. On either side rode Conrade of Mont-Fitchet and Albert de Malvoisin, who acted as godfathers to the champion.

Then came a guard of warders on foot, amidst whose partizans might be seen the pale form of the accused moving with a slow but undismayed step towards the scene of her fate. She was

stript of all her ornaments, and a coarse white dress, of the simplest form, was substituted for her Oriental garments; yet there was such an exquisite mixture of courage and resignation in her look that even in this garb, and with no other ornament than her long black tresses, each eye wept that looked upon her. She was conducted to a black chair placed near the pile.

The Grand Master assumed his seat; and when the chivalry of his order was placed around and behind him, a flourish of the trumpets announced that the court were seated for judgment.

Malvoisin stepped forward and laid the glove of Rebecca, which was the pledge of battle, at the feet of the Grand Master.

"Valorous lord and reverend father," said he, "here standeth the good knight, Brian de Bois-Guilbert, Knight Preceptor of the Order of the Temple, who, by accepting the pledge of battle which I now lay at your reverence's feet, hath become bound to do his devoir in combat this day, to maintain that this Jewish maiden, by name Rebecca, hath justly deserved the doom passed upon her, condemning her to die as a sorceress."

The trumpets then again flourished and a herald stepping forward proclaimed aloud, "Oyez, oyez, oyez. Here standeth the good knight, Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, ready to do battle

with any knight of free blood, who will sustain the quarrel allowed and allotted to the Jewess Rebecca." The trumpets again sounded and there was a dead pause of many minutes.

"No champion appears for the appellant," said the Grand Master. "Go, herald, and ask her whether she expects any one to do battle for her in this her cause."

The herald went to the chair in which Rebecca was seated; and said, "Damsel, the Honourable and Reverend the Grand Master demands of thee, if thou art prepared with champion to do battle this day in thy behalf, or if thou dost yield thee as one justly condemned to a deserved doom."

"Say to the Grand Master," replied Rebecca, "that I maintain my innocence and do not yield me as justly condemned. Say to him that I challenge such delay as his forms will permit to see if God will raise me up a deliverer; and when such uttermost space is passed, may His holy will be done!"

The herald retired to carry this answer to the Grand Master.

"God forbid," said Lucas Beaumanoir, "that Jew or Pagan should impeach us of injustice. Until the shadows be cast from the west to the eastward, will we wait to see if a champion shall

appear for this unfortunate woman. When the day is so far passed, let her prepare for death."

The herald communicated the words of the Grand Master to Rebecca, who bowed her head submissively, folded her arms, and, looking up towards heaven, seemed to expect that aid from above which she could scarce promise herself from man.

The judges had been two hours in the lists, awaiting in vain the appearance of a champion, when a knight, urging his horse to speed, appeared on the plain advancing towards the lists. A hundred voices exclaimed, "A champion, a champion!"

To the summons of the herald, who demanded his rank, his name, and purpose, the stranger knight answered readily and boldly, "I am a good knight and noble, come hither to sustain with lance and sword the just and lawful quarrel of this damsel, Rebecca, daughter of Isaac of York; to uphold the doom pronounced against her to be false and truthless, and to defy Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert as a traitor, murderer, and liar."

"The stranger must first show," said Malvoisin, "that he is a good knight, and of honourable lineage. The Temple sendeth not forth her champions against nameless men."

"My name," said the knight, raising his helmet, "is better known, my lineage more pure, Malvoisin, than thine own. I am Wilfred of Ivanhoe—Does the Grand Master allow me the combat ?"

"I may not deny what thou hast challenged," said the Grand Master, "provided the maiden accepts thee as her champion."

"Rebecca," said Ivanhoe, riding up to the fatal chair, "dost thou accept of me for thy champion ?"

"I do," she said—"I do," fluttered by an emotion which the fear of death had been unable to produce—"I do accept thee as the champion whom Heaven hath sent me. Yet, no—no—thy wounds are uncured—Meet not that proud man ; why shouldst thou perish also ?"

But Ivanhoe was already at his post, and had closed his visor, and assumed his lance. Bois-Guilbert did the same. The trumpets sounded, and the knights charged each other in full career. The wearied horse of Ivanhoe, and its no less exhausted rider, went down, as all had expected, before the well-aimed lance and vigorous steed of the Templar. This issue of the combat all had foreseen ; but although the spear of Ivanhoe did but, in comparison, touch the shield of Bois-Guilbert, that champion, to the astonishment

of all who beheld it, reeled in his saddle, lost his stirrups, and fell in the lists.

Ivanhoe, extricating himself from his fallen horse, was soon on foot, hastening to mend his fortune with his sword ; but his antagonist arose not ; Wilfred, placing his foot on his breast, and the sword's point to his throat, commanded him to yield him, or die on the spot. Bois-Guilbert returned no answer.

" Slay him not, Sir Knight," cried the Grand Master, " unshriven and unabsolved—kill not body and soul ! We allow him vanquished."

He descended into the lists, and commanded them to unhelm the conquered champion. His eyes were closed ; the dark red flush was still on his brow. As they looked on him in astonishment, the eyes opened ; but they were fixed and glazed. The flush passed from his brow, and gave way to the pallid hue of death. Unscathed by the lance of his enemy, he had died a victim to the violence of his own contending passions.

" This is indeed the judgment of God," said the Grand Master. " I pronounce the maiden free and guiltless. The arms and the body of the deceased knight are at the will of the victor."

" I will not despoil him of his weapons," said the Knight of Ivanhoe, " nor condemn his corpse to shame : he hath fought for Christen-

dom. God's arm, no human hand, hath this day struck him down."

He was interrupted by a clattering of horses' feet; and the Black Knight galloped into the lists. He was followed by a numerous band of men-at-arms, and several knights in complete armour.

"I am too late," he said, looking around him; "Ivanhoe, was this well, to take on thee such a venture, and thou scarce able to keep thy saddle? —But we must waste no time. Bohun, do thine office!"

A knight stepped forward from the King's attendants, and, laying his hand on the shoulder of Albert de Malvoisin, said, "I arrest thee of high treason."

The Grand Master had hitherto stood astonished at the appearance of so many warriors. He now spoke.

"Who dares to arrest a knight of the Temple of Zion, within the girth of his own preceptory, and in the presence of the Grand Master? And by whose authority is this bold outrage offered?"

"I make the arrest," replied the knight—"I, Henry Bohun, Earl of Essex, Lord High Constable of England."

"And he arrests Malvoisin," said the King, raising his visor, "by the order of Richard

Plantagenet, here present. Conrade Mont-Fichet, it is well for thee thou art born no subject of mine—But for thee, Malvoisin, thou diest with thy brother Philip, ere the world be a week older."

"I will resist thy doom," said the Grand Master.

"Proud Templar," said the King, "thou canst not; look up, and behold the royal standard of England floats over thy towers instead of thy Temple banner! Be wise, Beaumanoir, and make no bootless opposition. Thy hand is in the lion's mouth."

"I will appeal to Rome against thee!" said the Grand Master, "for usurpation on the immunities and privileges of our order."

The Grand Master then gave the signal of departure; and the Templars moved off as slowly as their horses could step, as if to show it was only the will of their Grand Master, and no fear of the opposing and superior force, which compelled them to withdraw.

During the tumult which attended their retreat, Rebecca saw and heard nothing; she was locked in the arms of her aged father, giddy, and almost senseless, with the rapid change of circumstances around her. But one word from Isaac at length recalled her scattered feelings.

"Let us go," he said, "my dear daughter, my recovered treasure—let us go to throw ourselves at the feet of the good youth."

"Not so," said Rebecca, "O no—no—no; I must not at this moment dare to speak to him. Alas! I should say more than——No, my father, let us instantly leave this evil place."

"But, my daughter," said Isaac, "to leave him who hath come forth like a strong man, holding his life as nothing, so he might redeem thy captivity; and thou, too, the daughter of a people strange unto him and his—this is service to be thankfully acknowledged."

"It is—it is—most thankfully—most devoutly acknowledged," said Rebecca; "it shall be still more so—but not now—for the sake of thy beloved Rachel, father, grant my request—not now!"

"Nay, but," said Isaac, insisting; "they will deem us more thankless than mere dogs!"

"But thou seest, my dear father, that King Richard is in presence, and that——"

"True, my best—my wisest Rebecca. Let us hence—let us hence! Money he will lack, for he has just returned from Palestine, and, as they say, from prison; and pretext for exacting it, should he need any, may arise out of my

simple traffic with his brother John. Away—away, let us hence!"

And hurrying his daughter in his turn, he conducted her from the lists, and by means of conveyance which he had provided, transported her safely to the house of the Rabbi Nathan.

CHAPTER XLII

Shortly after the judicial combat, Cedric was summoned to the court of Richard which was held at York, and he refused not obedience. In fact, the return of Richard had quenched every hope that he had entertained of restoring a Saxon dynasty in England.

Moreover, it could not escape even his reluctant observation that his project for an absolute union among the Saxons, by the marriage of Rowena and Athelstane, was now completely at an end, by the mutual dissent of both parties concerned. Rowena had always expressed her repugnance to Athelstane, and now Athelstane was no less plain and positive in proclaiming his

resolution never to pursue his addresses to the Lady Rowena. And ere he had been a guest at court for seven days, Cedric had given his consent to the marriage of his ward Rowena and his son Wilfred of Ivanhoe.

It was upon the second morning after the happy bridal that the Lady Rowena was made acquainted by her handmaid Elgitha, that a damsel desired admission to her presence, and solicited that their parley might be without witness. Rowena wondered, hesitated, became curious, and ended by recommending the damsel to be admitted, and her attendants to withdraw.

She entered—a noble and commanding figure, the long white veil, in which she was shrouded, overshadowing rather than concealing the elegance and majesty of her shape. Rowena arose, and would have conducted her lovely visitor to a seat; but the stranger looked at Elgitha, and again intimated a wish to discourse with the Lady Rowena alone. Elgitha had no sooner retired with unwilling steps than, to the surprise of the Lady of Ivanhoe, her fair visitant kneeled on one knee, pressed her hands to her forehead, and bending her head to the ground, in spite of Rowena's resistance, kissed the embroidered hem of her tunic.

"What means this, lady?" said the surprised bride. "Why do you offer me a deference so unusual?"

"Because to you, Lady of Ivanhoe," said Rebecca, rising up and resuming the usual quiet dignity of her manner, "I may lawfully, and without rebuke, pay the debt of gratitude which I owe to Wilfred of Ivanhoe. I am the unhappy Jewess for whom your husband hazarded his life against such fearful odds in the tiltyard of Templestowe."

"Damsel," said Rowena, "Wilfred of Ivanhoe on that day rendered back but in slight measure your unceasing charity towards him in his wounds and misfortunes. Speak, is there aught remains in which he or I can serve thee?"

"Nothing," said Rebecca, calmly; "unless you transmit to him my grateful farewell."

"You leave England, then?" said Rowena, scarcely recovering from the surprise of this extraordinary visit.

"I leave it, lady, ere this moon again changes. My father hath a brother high in favour with Mohamed Boabdil, King of Granada—thither we go, secure of peace and protection."

"And are you not then as well protected in England?" said Rowena. "My husband has

favour with the King ; the King himself is just and generous."

" Thy speech is fair, lady," said Rebecca, " and thy purpose fairer ; but it may not be. Farewell ; yet, ere I go, indulge me one request. The bridal veil hangs over thy face ; deign to raise it, and let me see the features of which fame speaks so highly."

" They are scarce worthy of being looked upon," said Rowena ; " but, expecting the same from my visitant, I remove my veil."

She took it off accordingly ; and, partly from the consciousness of beauty, and partly from bashfulness, she blushed so intensely that cheek, brow, neck, and bosom were suffused with crimson. Rebecca blushed also.

" Lady," she said, " long, long will I remember your features, and bless God that I leave my noble deliverer united with—"

She stopped short—her eyes filled with tears. She hastily wiped them, and answered to the anxious inquiries of Rowena,—" I am well, lady—well. But my heart swells when I think of Torquilstone and the lists of Templestowe. Farewell. One, the most trifling part of my duty, remains undischarged. Accept this casket ; —startle not at its contents."

Rowena opened the small silver-chased casket,

and perceived a necklace, with ear jewels, of diamonds, which were obviously of immense value.

"It is impossible," she said, tendering back the casket. "I dare not accept a gift of such consequence."

"Yet keep it, lady," returned Rebecca. "You have power, rank, command, influence; we have wealth, the source both of our strength and weakness. The value of these toys, ten times multiplied, would not influence half so much as your slightest wish. Accept these, lady —to me they are valueless. I will never wear jewels more."

"You are then unhappy!" said Rowena, struck with the manner in which Rebecca uttered the last words. "O remain with us; the counsel of holy men will wean you from your erring law, and I will be a sister to you."

"No, lady," answered Rebecca, the same calm melancholy reigning in her soft voice and beautiful features, "that may not be. He to whom I dedicate my future life will be my comforter, if I do His will."

"Have you then convents, to one of which you mean to retire?" asked Rowena.

"No, lady," said the Jewess; "but among my people, since the time of Abraham downwards, have been women who have devoted their

thoughts to Heaven, and their actions to works of kindness to men—tending the sick, feeding the hungry, and relieving the distressed. Among these will Rebecca be numbered. Say this to thy lord, should he chance to inquire after the fate of her whose life he saved."

There was an involuntary tremour in Rebecca's voice, and a tenderness of accent, which perhaps betrayed more than she would willingly have expressed. She hastened to bid Rowena adieu.

"Farewell," she said. "May He who made both Jew and Christian shower down on you His choicest blessings!"

She glided from the apartment, leaving Rowena surprised as if a vision had passed before her.